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CHAPTER I.

JOHN HAS AN ADVENTURE.

THE day had been very hot even for the Transvaal, where, even in the autumn, the days still know how to be hot, although the neck of the summer is broken—that is, when the thunderstorms hold off for a week or two, as they occasionally will. Even the succulent blue lilies—a variety of the agapanthus which is so familiar to us in English greenhouses—hung their long trumpet-shaped flowers and looked oppressed and miserable, beneath the burning breath of the hot wind which had been blowing for hours like the draught of a volcano. The grass, too, near the wide roadway, that stretched in a feeble and indeterminate sort of fashion across the veldt, forking, branching, and reuniting like the veins on a lady's arm, was completely coated over with a thick layer of red dust. But the hot wind was going down now, as it always does towards sunset. Indeed, all that remained of it were a few strictly local and miniature whirlwinds, which would suddenly spring up on the road itself, and twist and twirl fiercely round, raising a mighty column of dust fifty feet or more into the air, where it hung long after the cause of it had passed, and then slowly dissolved as its particles floated to the earth.

Coming along the road, in the immediate track of one of these desultory and inexplicable whirlwinds, was a man on horseback. The man looked limp and dirty, and the horse limper and dirtier.

The hot wind had taken all the bones out of them, as the Kafirs say, which was not very much to be wondered at, seeing that they had been journeying through it for the last four hours, without off saddling. Suddenly the whirlwind, which had been travelling along pretty smartly, halted, and the dust, after turning round a few times in the air like a dying top, slowly began to dissolve in the accustomed fashion. The man on the horse halted too, and contemplated it in an absent kind of way.

'It's just like a man's life,' he said aloud to his horse, 'coming from nobody knows where, nobody knows why, and making a little column of dust on the world's highway, and then passing away and leaving the dust to fall to the ground again, and be trodden under foot and forgotten.'

The speaker, a stout, well set-up, rather ugly man, apparently on the wrong side of thirty, with pleasant blue eyes and a reddish peaked beard, laughed a little at his own sententious reflection, and then gave his jaded horse a tap with the sjamboek in his hand.

'Come on, Blesbok,' he said, 'or we shall never get to old Croft's place to-night. By Jove! I believe that must be the turn,' and he pointed with his whip to a little rutty track that turned from the Wakkerstroom main road and stretched away towards a curious isolated hill with a large flat top, that rose out of the rolling plain some four miles to the right. 'The old Boer said the second turn,' he went on still talking to himself, 'but perhaps he lied. I am told that some of them think it a good joke to send an Englishman a few miles wrong. Let's see, they said the place was under the lee of a table-topped hill, about half an hour's ride from the main road, and that is a table-topped hill, so I think I will try it. Come on, Blesbok,' and he put the tired nag into a sort of 'tripple' or ambling canter much affected by South African horses.

'Life is a queer thing,' reflected Captain John Niel to himself as he slowly cantered along. 'Now here am I, at the age of thirty-four, about to begin the world again as assistant to an old Transvaal farmer. It is a pretty end to all one's ambitions, and to fourteen years' work in the army; but it is what it has come to, my boy, so you had better make the best of it.'

Just then his cogitations were interrupted, for on the farther side of a gentle slope there suddenly appeared an extraordinary sight. Over the crest of the rise of land, now some four or five hundred yards away, a pony with a lady on its back came wildly

galloping, and after it, with wings spread and outstretched neck, a huge cock ostrich was speeding along, covering twelve or fifteen feet at every stride of its long legs. The pony was still twenty yards ahead of the bird, and coming towards John rapidly, but strive as it would it could not distance the swiftest thing on all the earth. Five seconds past—the great bird was close alongside now—Ah ! and John Niel turned sick and shut his eyes as he rode, for he saw the ostrich's thick leg fly high into the air and then sweep down like a leaded bludgeon !

Thud ! It had missed the lady and struck her horse upon the spine, behind the saddle, for the moment completely paralysing it, so that it fell all of a heap on to the veldt. In a moment the girl on its back was up and off towards him, and after her came the ostrich. Up went the great leg again, but before it came crashing on to her shoulders she had flung herself face downwards on the grass. In an instant the huge bird was on the top of her, kicking at her, rolling over her, and crushing the very life out of her. It was at this juncture that John Niel arrived upon the scene. The moment the ostrich saw him he gave up his attacks upon the lady on the ground and began to waltz towards him with a pompous sort of step that these birds sometimes assume before they give battle. Now Captain Niel was unaccustomed to the ways of ostriches, and so was his horse, which showed a strong inclination to bolt ; as, indeed, under other circumstances, his rider would have been glad to do himself. But he could not abandon beauty in distress, so, finding it impossible to control his horse, he slipped off it, and with his sjambock or hide-whip in his hand valiantly faced the enemy. For a moment or two the great bird stood still, blinking its lustrous round eyes at him and gently swaying its graceful neck to and fro. Then all of a sudden it spread out its wings and came for him like a thunderbolt. He sprang to one side, and was aware of a rustle of rushing feathers, and of a vision of a thick leg striking downwards past his head. Fortunately it missed him, and the ostrich sped past like a flash. Before he could turn, however, it was back and had landed the full weight of one of its awful forward kicks in the broad of his back, and away he went head-over-heels like a shot rabbit. In a second he was on his legs again, shaken indeed, but not much the worse, and perfectly mad with fury and pain. At him came the ostrich, and at the ostrich went he, catching it a blow across the slim neck with his sjambock, that staggered it for

a moment. Profiting by the check, he seized the bird by the wing and held on like grim death with both hands. Then they began to gyrate, slowly at first, then quicker, and yet more quick, till at last it seemed to Captain John Niel that time and space and the solid earth were nothing but a revolving vision fixed somewhere in the watches of the night. Above him, like a stationary pivot, towered the tall graceful neck, beneath him spun the top-like legs, and in front of him was a soft black and white mass of feathers.

Thud, and a cloud of stars! He was on his back, and the ostrich, who did not seem to be affected by giddiness, was on him, punishing him dreadfully. Luckily an ostrich cannot kick a man very hard when he is flat on the ground. If he could, there would have been an end of John Niel, and this story need never have been written.

Half a minute or so passed, during which the bird worked his sweet will upon his prostrate enemy, and at the end of it the man began to feel very much as though his earthly career was closed. Just as things were growing faint and dim to him, however, he suddenly saw a pair of white arms clasp themselves round the ostrich's legs from behind, and heard a voice cry:—

‘Break his neck while I hold his legs, or he will kill you.’

This roused him from his torpor, and he staggered to his feet. Meanwhile the ostrich and the young lady had come to the ground, and were rolling about together in a confused heap, over which the elegant neck and open hissing mouth wavered to and fro like a cobra about to strike. With a rush he seized the neck in both his hands, and, putting out all his strength (for he was a strong man), he twisted it till it broke with a snap, and after a few wild and convulsive bounds and struggles the great bird lay dead.

Then he sank down dazed and exhausted, and surveyed the scene. The ostrich was perfectly quiet, and would never kick again, and the lady too was quiet. He wondered vaguely if the brute had killed her—he was as yet too weak to go and see—and then fell to gazing at her face. Her head was pillow'd on the body of the dead bird, and its feathery plumes made it a fitting resting-place. Slowly it dawned on him that the face was very beautiful, although it looked so pale just now. Low broad brow, crowned with soft yellow hair, the chin very round and white, the mouth sweet though rather large. The eyes he could not see, because they were closed, for the lady had fainted. For the rest, she was quite young—about twenty, tall and finely formed. Presently he

got a little better, and, creeping towards her (for he was sadly knocked about), took her hand and began to chafe it between his own. It was a well-formed hand, but brown, and showed signs of doing plenty of hard work. Soon she opened her eyes, and he noted with satisfaction that they were very good eyes, blue in colour. Then she sat up and laughed a little.

‘Well, I am silly,’ she said; ‘I believe I fainted.’

‘It is not much to be wondered at,’ said John Niel politely, and lifting his hand to take off his hat, only to find that it had gone in the fray. ‘I hope you are not very much hurt by the bird.’

‘I don’t know,’ she said doubtfully. ‘But I am glad that you killed the skellum (vicious beast). He got out of the ostrich camp three days ago, and has been lost ever since. He killed a boy last year, and I told Uncle he ought to shoot him then, but he would not, because he was such a beauty.’

‘Might I ask,’ said John Niel, ‘are you Miss Croft?’

‘Yes, I am—one of them. There are two of us, you know; and I can guess who you are—you are Captain Niel, whom Uncle is expecting to help him with the farm and the ostriches.’

‘If all of them are like that,’ he said, pointing to the dead bird, ‘I don’t think that I shall take kindly to ostrich farming.’

She laughed, showing a charming line of teeth. ‘Oh no,’ she said, ‘he was the only bad one—but, Captain Niel, I think you will find it fearfully dull. There are nothing but Boers about here, you know. There are no English people nearer than Wakkerstroom.’

‘You overlook yourself,’ he said politely; for really this daughter of the wilderness had a very charming air about her.

‘Oh,’ she answered, ‘I am only a girl, you know, and besides, I am not clever. Jess, now—that’s my sister—Jess has been at school at Cape Town, and she *is* clever. I was at Cape Town, too, but I didn’t learn much there. But, Captain Niel, both the horses have bolted; mine has gone home, and I expect yours has followed, and I should like to know how we are going to get up to Mooifontein (beautiful fountain, that’s what we call our place, you know). Can you walk?’

‘I don’t know,’ he answered doubtfully; ‘I’ll try. That bird has knocked me about a good deal,’ and accordingly he staggered on to his legs, only to collapse with an exclamation of pain. His ankle was sprained, and he was so stiff and bruised that he could hardly stir. ‘How far is the house?’ he asked.

‘Only about a mile—just there; we shall see it from the crest of

the rise. Look, I'm all right. It was silly to faint, but he kicked all the breath out of me,' and she got up and danced a little on the grass to show him. 'My word, though, I am sore! You must take my arm, that's all ; that is if you don't mind ?'

'Oh dear no, indeed, I don't mind,' he said, laughing ; and so they started, arm affectionately linked in arm.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE SISTERS CAME TO MOOIFONTEIN.

'CAPTAIN NIEL,' said Bessy Croft (for that was her name) when they had painfully limped one hundred yards or so, 'will you think me rude if I ask you a question ?'

'Not at all.'

'What has induced you to come and bury yourself in this place ?'

'Why do you ask ?'

'Because I don't think that you will like it. I don't think,' she added slowly, 'that it is a fit place for an English gentleman and an army officer like you. You will find the Boer ways horrid, and then there will only be my old uncle and us two for you to associate with.'

John Niel laughed. 'English gentlemen ain't so particular nowadays, I can tell you, Miss Croft, especially when they have to earn a living. Take my case, for instance, for I may as well tell you exactly how I stand. I have been in the army fourteen years, and am now thirty-four. Well, I have been able to live there because I had an old aunt who allowed me 120*l.* a year. Six months ago she died, leaving me the little property she possessed, for most of her income came from an annuity. After paying expenses, duty, &c., it amounts to 1,115*l.* Now, the interest on that is about fifty pounds a year, and I can't live in the army on that. Just after my aunt's death I came to Durban with my regiment from Mauritius, and now they are ordered home. Well, I liked the country, and I knew that I could not afford to live at home, so I got a year's leave of absence, and made up my mind to have a look round to see if I could not take to farming. Then a gentleman in Durban told me of your uncle, and said that he wanted to dispose of a third interest in his place for a thousand pounds, as

he was getting too old to manage it himself; and so I entered into correspondence with him, and agreed to come up for a few months to see how I liked it; and accordingly here I am, just in time to save you from being knocked to bits by an ostrich.'

'Yes, indeed,' she answered, laughing: 'you've had a warm welcome at any rate. Well, I hope you will like it.'

Just as he finished his story they got to the top of the rise over which the ostrich had pursued Bessie Croft, and saw a Kafir coming towards them, leading the pony in one hand and Captain Niel's horse in the other. About a hundred yards behind the horses a lady was walking.

'Ah,' said Bessie, 'they've caught the horses, and here is Jess come to see what is the matter.'

By this time the lady in question was quite close, so that John was able to get a first impression of her. She was small and rather thin, with quantities of curling brown hair; not by any means a lovely woman, as her sister undoubtedly was, but possessing two very remarkable characteristics—a complexion of extraordinary and uniform pallor, and a pair of the most beautiful dark eyes he had ever looked on. Altogether, though her size was almost insignificant, she was a striking-looking person, with a face one was not likely to forget. Before he had time to observe any more they were up to them.

'What on earth is the matter, Bessie?' she said, with a quick glance at her companion, and speaking in a low full voice, with just a slight South African accent, that is taking enough in a pretty woman. Whereon Bessie broke out with a history of their adventure, appealing to her companion for confirmation at intervals.

Meanwhile her sister Jess stood quite still and silent, and it struck Captain Niel that her face was the most singularly impassive one he had ever seen. It never changed, even when her sister told how the ostrich rolled on her and nearly killed her, or how they finally subdued the foe. 'Dear me,' he thought to himself, 'what a very remarkable woman! She can't have much heart.' But just as he thought it the girl looked up, and then he saw where the expression lay. It was in those remarkable eyes. Impassive as her face was, the dark eyes were alight with life and a sort of excitement that made them shine gloriously. The contrast between the shining eyes and the impassive face beneath them struck him as so extraordinary as to be almost uncanny; and, as a matter of fact, it was doubtless both unusual and remarkable.

'You have had a wonderful escape, but I am sorry for the bird,' she said at last.

'Why?' asked John.

'Because we were great friends. I was the only person who could manage him.'

'Yes,' put in Bessie, 'the savage brute would follow her about like a dog. It was just the oddest thing I ever saw. But come on; we must be getting home, it's growing dark. Mouti' (medicine)—addressing the Kafir in Zulu—'help Captain Niel on to his horse. Be careful that the saddle does not twist round; the girths may be loose.'

Thus adjured, John, with the help of the Zulu, clambered into his saddle, an example that the lady quickly followed, and they once more set off through the gathering darkness. Presently he became aware that they were passing up a drive bordered by tall blue-gums, and next minute the barking of a large dog and the sudden appearance of lighted windows told him that they had reached the house. At the door—or rather, opposite to it, for there was a verandah in front—they stopped and got off their horses. As they did so, out of the house there came a shout of welcome, and presently in the doorway, showing out clear against the light, appeared a striking and, in its way, most pleasant figure. He—for it was a man—was very tall, or, rather, he had been very tall. Now he was much bent with age and rheumatism. His long white hair hung low upon his neck, and fell back from a prominent brow. The top of the head was quite bald, like the tonsure of a priest, and shone and glistened in the lamplight, and round this oasis the thin white locks fell down. The face was shrivelled like the surface of a well-kept apple, and, like an apple, rosy red. The features were aquiline and well marked, the eyebrows still black and very bushy, and beneath them shone a pair of grey eyes, as keen and bright as hawks'. But for all its sharpness, there was nothing unpleasant or fierce about the face. On the contrary, it was pervaded by a remarkable air of good-nature and pleasant shrewdness. For the rest, the man was dressed in rough tweed clothes, tall riding-boots, and held a broad-brimmed Boer hunting-hat in his hand. Such was the outer man of old Silas Croft, one of the most remarkable men in the Transvaal, as John Niel first saw him.

'Is that you, Captain Niel?' roared out the stentorian voice. 'The natives said you were coming. A welcome to you! I am

glad to see you—very glad. Why, what is the matter with you ?' he went on as the Zulu Mouti ran to help him off his horse.

' Matter, Mr. Croft ?' answered John: ' why, the matter is that your favourite ostrich has nearly killed me and your niece here, and that I have killed your favourite ostrich.'

Then followed explanations from Bessie, during which he was helped off his horse and into the house.

' It serves me right,' said the old man. ' To think of it now, just to think of it ! Well, Bessie, my love, thank God that you escaped—ay, and you too, Captain Niel. Here, you boys, take the Scotch cart and a couple of oxen and go and fetch the brute home. We may as well have the feathers off him, at any rate, before the aasvögels (vultures) tear him to bits.'

After he had washed himself and tended his injuries with arnica and water, John managed to get into the principal sitting-room, where supper was waiting. It was a very pleasant room, furnished in European style, and carpeted with mats made of springbuck skins. In the corner was a piano, and by it a book-case, filled with the works of standard authors, the property, as John rightly guessed, of Bessie's sister Jess.

Supper went off pleasantly enough, and after it was over the two girls sang and played whilst the men smoked. And here a fresh surprise awaited him, for after Bessie, who had now apparently almost recovered from her mauling, had played a piece or two creditably enough, Jess, who so far had been nearly silent, sat down to the piano. She did not do this willingly, indeed, for it was not until her patriarchal uncle had insisted in his ringing, cheery voice that she should let Captain Niel hear how she could sing that she consented. But at last she did consent, and then, after letting her fingers stray somewhat aimlessly along the chords, she suddenly broke out into such song as John Niel had never heard before. Her voice, beautiful as it was, was not what is known as a cultivated voice, and it was a German song, and therefore he did not understand it, but there was no need of words to translate its burden. Passion, despairing yet hoping through its despair, echoed in its every line, and love, unending love, hovered over the glorious notes—nay, descended on them like a spirit, and made them his. Up ! up ! rang her wild sweet voice, thrilling his nerves till they answered to the music as an *Æolian* harp answers to the winds. On went the song with a divine sweep, like the sweep of rushing pinions ; higher, yet higher it soared, lifting up the listener's heart

far above the world on the trembling wings of sound—ay, even higher, till the music hung at heaven's gate, and then it fell, swiftly as an eagle falls, quivered, and was dead.

John gave a gasp, and, so strongly was he moved, sank back in his chair, feeling almost faint with the revulsion of feeling that ensued when the notes had died away. He looked up, and caught Bessie watching him with an air of curiosity and amusement. Jess was still leaning against the piano, and gently touching the notes, over which her head was bent low, showing the coils of curling hair which were twisted round it like a coronet.

‘Well, Captain Niel,’ said the old man, waving his pipe in her direction, ‘and what do you say to my singing-bird’s music, eh? Isn’t it enough to draw the heart out of a man, eh, and turn his marrow to water, eh?’

‘I never heard anything quite like it,’ he answered simply, ‘and I have heard most singers. It is beautiful. Certainly, I never expected to hear such singing in the Transvaal.’

She turned quickly, and he observed that, though her eyes were alight with excitement, her face was as impassive as ever.

‘There is no need for you to laugh at me, Captain Niel,’ she said quickly, and then, with an abrupt ‘Good-night,’ left the room.

The old man smiled, jerked the stem of his pipe over his shoulder after her, and winked in a way that, no doubt, meant unutterable things, but which did not convey much to his astonished guest, who sat still and said nothing. Then Bessie got up and bade him good-night in her pleasant voice, and with housewifely care inquired as to whether his room was to his liking, and how many blankets he liked upon his bed, telling him that if he found the odour of the moonflowers that grew near the verandah too strong, he had better shut the right-hand window and open that on the other side of the room; and then at length, with a piquant little nod of her golden head, she went off, looking, he thought as he watched her retreating figure, about as healthy, graceful, and generally satisfactory a young woman as a man could wish to see.

‘Take a glass of grog, Captain Niel,’ said the old man, pushing the square bottle towards him, ‘you’ll need it after the mauling that brute gave you. By-the-way, I haven’t thanked you enough for saving my Bessie! But I do thank you, yes, that I do. I must tell you that Bessie is my favourite niece. Never was there such

a girl—never. Moves like a springbuck, and what an eye and form! Work, too—she'll do as much work as three. There's no nonsense about Bessie, none at all. She's not a fine lady, for all her fine looks.'

'The two sisters seem very different,' said John.

'Ay, you're right there,' said the old man. 'You'd never think that the same blood ran in their veins, would you? There's three years between them, that's one thing. Bessie's the youngest, you see—she's just twenty, and Jess is twenty-three. Lord, to think that it is twenty-three years since that girl was born! And theirs was a queer story too.'

'Indeed?' said his listener, interrogatively.

'Ay,' he went on absently, knocking out his pipe, and refilling it out of a big brown jar of coarse-cut Boer tobacco, 'I'll tell it to you if you like: you are going to live in the house, and you may as well know it. I am sure, Captain Niel, that it will go no further. You see I was born in England, yes, and well-born too. I come from Cambridgeshire—from the fat fen-land down round Ely. My father was a clergyman. Well, he wasn't rich, and when I was twenty he gave me his blessing, thirty sovereigns in my pocket, and my passage to the Cape; and I shook his hand, God bless him, and off I came, and here in the old colony and this country I have been for fifty years, for I was seventy yesterday. Well, I'll tell you more about that another time, it's about the girls I'm speaking now. After I left home—twenty years after, or hard on it—my dear old father married again, a youngish woman with some money, but beneath him somewhat in life, and by her he had one son and then died. Well, it was but little I heard of my half-brother, except that he had turned out very badly, married, and taken to drink, till one night some twelve years ago, when a strange thing happened. I was sitting here in this very room, ay, in this very chair—for this part of the house was up then, though the wings weren't built—and smoking my pipe, and listening to the lashing of the rain, for it was a very foul night, when suddenly an old pointer dog I had, named Ben, gave a bark.

'"Lie down, Ben, it's only the Kafirs," said I.

'Just then I thought I heard a faint sort of rapping at the door, and Ben barked again, so I get up and opened it, and in came two little girls wrapped up in old shawls or some such gear. Well, I shut the door, looking out first to see if there were any more outside, and then I stood and stared at the two little things with my

mouth open. There they stood, hand in hand, the water dripping from both of them, and the eldest might have been eleven, and the second about eight. They didn't say anything, but the eldest turned and took the shawl and hat off the younger—that was Bessie—and there was her sweet little face and her golden hair, and damp enough both of them were, and she put her thumb in her mouth, and stood and looked at me till I began to think that I was dreaming.

“Please, sir,” said the biggest at last, “is this Mr. Croft's house—Mr. Croft—South African Republic?”

“Yes, little Miss, this is his house, and this is the South African Republic, and I am he. And now who might you be, my dears?” I answered.

“If you please, sir, we are your nieces, and we have come to you from England.”

“What!” I holloaed, startled out of my wits, as well I might be.

“Oh, sir,” says the poor little thing, clasping her thin wet hands, “please don't send us away. Bessie is so wet, and cold and hungry too, she isn't fit to go any farther.”

‘And she set to work to cry, whereon the little one cried too, from fright and cold and sympathy.

‘Well, of course, I took them both to the fire, and set them on my knees, and holloaed for Hebe, the old Hottentot woman who did my cooking, and between us we undressed them, and wrapped them up in some old clothes, and fed them with soup and wine, so that in half an hour they were quite happy and not a bit frightened.

‘“And now, young ladies,” I said, “come and give me a kiss, both of you, and tell me how you came here.”

‘And this is the tale they told me—completed, of course, from what I learnt afterwards—and an odd one it is. It seems that my half-brother married a Norfolk lady—a sweet young thing—and treated her like a dog. He was a drunken rascal, was my half-brother, and he beat his poor wife and shamefully neglected her, and even ill-treated the two little girls, till at last the poor woman, weak as she was from suffering and ill-health, could bear it no longer, and formed the wild idea of escaping to this country and throwing herself upon my protection. It will show how desperate she must have been. She scraped together and borrowed some money, enough to pay for three second-class passages to Natal and a few pounds over, and one day, when her brute of a husband was away on the drink and gamble, she slipped on board a sailing ship in

the London Docks, and before he knew anything about it they were well out to sea. But it was her last effort, poor dear soul, and the excitement of it finished her. Before they had been ten days at sea, she sank and died, and the two poor children were left alone. And what they must have suffered, or rather what poor Jess must have suffered, for she was old enough to feel, God only knows. But I can tell you this, she has never got over the shock to this hour. It has left its mark on her, sir. But, let people say what they will, there is a Power that looks after the helpless, and that Power took those poor, homeless, wandering children under its wing. The captain of the vessel befriended them, and when at last they got to Durban some of the passengers made a subscription, and got an old Boer, who was coming up this way with his wife to the Transvaal, to take them under his charge. The Boer and his vrouw treated the children fairly well, but they did not do one thing more than they bargained for. At the turn from the Wakkerstroom road, that you came along to-day, they put the children down, for they had no luggage with them, and told them that if they went along there they would come to Meinheer Croft's house. That was in the middle of the afternoon, and they were till eight o'clock getting here, poor little dears, for the track was fainter then than it is now, and they wandered off into the veldt, and would have perished there in the wet and cold had they not chanced to see the lights of the house. And that was how my nieces came here, Captain Niel. And here they have been ever since, except for a couple of years when I sent them to the Cape for schooling, and a lonely man I was when they were away.'

'And how about the father?' asked John Niel, deeply interested. 'Did you ever hear any more of him?'

'Hear of him, the villain!' almost shouted the old man, jumping up in wrath. 'Ay, d—n him, I heard of him. What do you think? The two chicks had been with me some eighteen months, long enough for me to learn to love them with all my heart, when one fine morning, as I was seeing about the new kraal wall, I see a fellow come riding up on an old raw-boned grey horse. Up he comes to me, and as he came I looked at him, and said to myself, "You are a drunkard you are, and a rogue, it's written on your face, and, what's more, I know your face." You see I did not guess that it was a son of my own father's that I was looking at. How should I?

“Is your name Croft?” he said.

“Ay,” I answered.

“So is mine,” he went on with a sort of a drunken leer. “I’m your brother.”

“Are you?” I said, beginning to get my back up, for I guessed what his game was, “and what may you be after? I tell you at once, and to your face, that if you are my brother you are a blackguard, and I don’t want to know you or have anything to do with you; and if you are not, I beg your pardon for coupling you with such a scoundrel.

“Oh, that’s your tune, is it?” he said with a sneer. “Well now, my dear brother Silas, I want my children. They have got a little half-brother at home—for I have married again, Silas—who is anxious to have them to play with, so if you will be so good as to hand them over, I’ll take them away at once.”

“You’ll take them away, will you?” said I, all of a tremble with rage and fear.

“Yes, Silas, I will. They are mine by law, and I am not going to breed children for you to have the comfort of their society. I’ve taken advice, Silas, and that’s sound law,” and he leered at me again.

I stood and looked at that man, and thought of how he had treated those poor children and their young mother, and my blood boiled, and I grew mad. Without another word I jumped over the half-finished wall, and caught him by the leg (for I was a strong man ten years ago) and jerked him off the horse. As he came down he dropped the sjambock from his hand, and I caught hold of it and then and there gave him the soundest hiding a man ever had. Lord, how he did holloa! When I was tired I let him get up.

“Now,” I said, “be off with you, and if you come back here I’ll bid the Kafirs hunt you back to Natal with their sticks. This is the South African Republic, and we don’t care overmuch about law here.” Which we didn’t in those days.

“All right, Silas,” he said, “all right, you shall pay for this. I’ll have those children, and, for your sake, I’ll make their life a hell—you mark my words—South African Republic or no South African Republic. I’ve got the law on my side.”

Off he rode, cursing and swearing, and I flung his sjambock after him. And it was the first and last time that I saw my brother.

‘What became of him?’ asked John Niel.

‘I’ll tell you, just to show you again that there is a Power that keeps such men in its eye. He got back to Newcastle that night, and went about the canteen there abusing me, and getting drunker and drunker, till at last the canteen keeper sent for his boys to turn him out. Well, the boys were rough, as Kafirs are apt to be with a drunken white man, and he struggled and fought, and in the middle of it the blood began to run from his mouth, and he dropped down dead of a broken blood-vessel, and there was an end of him. That is the story of the two girls, Captain Niel, and now I am off to bed. To-morrow I’ll show you round the farm, and we will have a talk about business. Good-night to you, Captain Niel. Good-night!’

CHAPTER III.

MR. FRANK MULLER.

JOHN NIEL woke early the next morning, feeling as sore and stiff as though he had been well beaten and then strapped up tight in horse-girths. He made shift, however, to dress himself, and then, with the help of a stick, limped through the French windows that opened from his room on to the verandah and surveyed the scene before him. It was a delightful spot. At the back of the house was the steep boulder-strewn face of the flat-topped hill that curved round on each side, embosoming a great slope of green, in the lap of which the house was placed. The house itself was solidly built of brown stone, and, with the exception of the waggon-shed and other outhouses which were roofed with galvanised iron, that shone and glistened in the rays of the morning sun in a way that would have made an eagle blink, was covered with rich brown thatch. All along its front ran a wide verandah, up the trellis-work of which green vines and blooming creepers trailed pleasantly, and beyond was the broad carriage-drive of red soil, bordered with bushy orange-trees laden with odorous flowers and green and golden fruit. On the farther side of the orange-trees were the gardens, fenced in with low walls of rough stone, and the orchard full of standard fruit-trees, and beyond these again the oxen and ostrich kraals, the latter full of long-necked birds. To the right of the house grew thriving plantations of blue-gum, and black wattle, and to the left was a broad stretch of

cultivated lands, lying so that they could be irrigated for winter crops by means of water led from the great spring that gushed from the mountain-side high above the house and gave its name of Mooifontein to the place.

All these and many more things John Niel saw as he looked out from the verandah at Mooifontein, but for the moment at any rate they were lost in the wild and wonderful beauty of the panorama that rolled away for miles and miles at his feet, till it was ended by the mighty range of the Drakensberg to the left, tipped here and there with snow, and by the dim and vast horizon of the swelling Transvaal plains to the right and far in front of him. It was a beautiful sight, and one to make the blood run in a man's veins and his heart beat happily because he was alive to see it. Mile upon mile of grass-clothed veldt beneath, bending and rippling like a corn-field in the quick breath of the morning, space upon space of deep-blue sky overhead with ne'er a cloud to dim it, and the swift rush of the wind between. Then to the left there, impressive to look on and conducive to solemn thoughts, the mountains rear their crests against the sky, and, crowned with the gathered snows of the centuries whose monuments they are, from æon to æon gaze majestically out over the wide plains and the ephemeral ant-like races that tread them, and while they endure think themselves the masters of their little world. And over all—mountain, plain, and flashing stream—the glorious light of the African sun and the Spirit of Life moving now as it once moved upon the darkling waters.

John stood and gazed at the untamed beauty of the scene, in his mind comparing it to many cultivated views that he had known, and coming to the conclusion that, however desirable the presence of civilised man might be in the world, it could not be said that his operations really added to its beauty. For the old line, 'Nature unadorned adorned the most,' still remains true in more senses than one. Presently his reflections were interrupted by the step of Silas Croft, which, notwithstanding his age and bent frame, still rang firm enough—and he turned to greet him.

'Well, Captain Niel,' said the old man, 'up already! It looks well if you mean to take to farming. Yes, it's a pretty view, and a pretty place too. Well, I made it. Twenty-five years ago I rode up here and saw this spot. Look, you see that rock there behind the house, I slept under it and woke at sunrise and looked out at this beautiful view and at the great veldt (it was all alive

with game then), and I said to myself, ' Silas, for five-and-twenty years have you wandered about this great country, and now you are getting tired of it ; you've never seen a fairer spot than this or a healthier ; now be a wise man and stop here.' And so I did. I bought the 3,000 morgen (6,000 acres), more or less, for 10*l.* down and a case of gin, and I set to work to make this place, and you see I have made it. Ay, it has grown under my hand, every stone and tree of it, and you know what that means in a new country. But one way and another I have done it, and now I have got too old to manage it, and that's how I came to give out that I wanted a partner, as old Snow told you down in Durban. You see, I told Snow it must be a gentleman ; I don't care much about the money, I'll take a thousand for a third share if I can get a gentleman—none of your Boers or mean whites for me. I tell you I have had enough of Boers and their ways ; the best day of my life was when old Shepstone ran up the Union Jack there in Pretoria and I could call myself an Englishman again. Lord ! and to think that there are men who are subjects of the Queen and want to be subjects of a Republic again—Mad ! Captain Niel, I tell you, quite mad !. However, there's an end of it all now. You know what Sir Garnet Wolseley told them in the name of the Queen up at the Vaal River, that this country would remain English till the sun stood still in the heavens and the waters of the Vaal ran backwards. That's good enough for me, for, as I tell these grumbling fellows who want the land back now that we have paid their debts and defeated their enemies, no English Government goes back on its word, or breaks engagements solemnly entered into by its representatives. We leave that sort of thing to foreigners. No, no, Captain Niel, I would not ask you to take a share in this place if I wasn't sure that it would remain under the British flag. But we will talk of all this another time, and now come in to breakfast.'

After breakfast, as John was far too lame to go about the farm, the fair Bessie suggested that he should come and help her to wash a batch of ostrich feathers, and, accordingly, off he went. The *locus operandi* was in a space of grass in the rear of a little clump of 'naatche' orange-trees, of which the fruit is like that of the Maltese orange, only larger. Here were placed an ordinary washing-tub half-filled with warm water and a tin bath full of cold. The ostrich feathers, many of which were completely coated with red dirt, were plunged first into the tub of warm water,

where John Niel scrubbed them with soap, and then transferred to the tin bath, where Bessie rinsed them and then laid them on a sheet in the sun to dry. The morning was very pleasant, and John soon came to the conclusion that there are many more disagreeable occupations in the world than the washing of ostrich feathers with a lovely girl to help you—for there was no doubt but that she was lovely, a very type of happy, healthy womanhood—as she sat there opposite to him on the little stool, her sleeves rolled up almost to the shoulder, showing a pair of arms that would not have disgraced a statue of Venus, and laughed and chatted away as she washed the feathers. Now, John Niel was not a susceptible man: he had gone through the fire years before and burnt his fingers like many another confiding youngster, but, all the same, he did wonder as he sat there and watched this fair girl, who somehow reminded him of a rich rose-bud bursting into bloom, how long it would be possible to live in the same house with her without falling under the spell of her charm and beauty. And then he began to think of Jess, and what a strange contrast the two were.

‘Where is your sister?’ he asked presently.

‘Jess? oh, I think that she has gone to the Lion Kloof, reading or sketching, I don’t know which. You see in this establishment I represent labour and Jess represents intellect,’ and she nodded her head prettily at him, and added, ‘There is a mistake somewhere, she got all the brains.’

‘Ah,’ said John, quietly, and looking up at her, ‘I don’t think that you are entitled to complain of the way that nature has treated you.’

She blushed a little, more at the tone of his voice than the words, and went on hastily, ‘Jess is the dearest, best, and cleverest woman in the whole world—there, I believe that she has only one fault, and that is that she thinks too much about me. Uncle told me that he had told you how we came here first when I was eight years old. Well, I remember that when we lost our way on the veldt that night, and it rained so and was so cold, Jess took off her own shawl and wrapped it round me over my own. Well, it has been just like that with her always. I am always to have the shawl—everything is to give way to me. But there, that is Jess all over; she is very cold, cold as a stone, I sometimes think, but when she does care for anybody it is enough to frighten one. I don’t know a great number of women, but

somehow I don't think that there can be many in the world like Jess. She is too good for this wild place, she ought to go away to England and write books and become a famous woman, only—' she added, reflectively, 'I am afraid that Jess's books would all be sad ones.'

Just then Bessie stopped and suddenly changed colour, the bunch of lank wet feathers she held in her hand dropping from it with a little splash back into the bath. Following her glance, John looked down the avenue of blue-gum trees and perceived a big man with a broad hat and mounted on a splendid black horse, cantering leisurely towards the house.

'Who is that, Miss Croft?' he asked.

'It is a man I don't like,' she said with a little stamp of her foot. 'His name is Frank Muller, and he is half a Boer and half an Englishman. He is very rich, and very clever, and owns all the land round this place, so Uncle has to be civil to him, though he does not like him either. I wonder what he wants now.'

On came the horse, and John thought that its rider was going to pass without seeing them, when suddenly the movement of Bessie's dress between the 'naatche' trees caught his eye, and he pulled up and looked round. He was a large and exceedingly handsome man, apparently about forty years old, with clear-cut features, cold, light-blue eyes, and a remarkable golden beard that hung right down over his chest. For a Boer he was rather smartly dressed, in English-made tweed clothes, and tall riding-boots.

'Ah, Miss Bessie,' he called out in English, 'there you are, with your pretty arms all bare. I'm in luck to come just in time to see them. Shall I come and help you to wash the feathers? Only say the word, now—'

Just then he caught sight of John Niel and checked himself.

'I have come to look for a black ox, branded with a heart and a "W" inside of the heart. Do you know if your uncle has seen it on the place anywhere?'

'No, Meinheer Muller,' replied Bessie, coldly, 'but he is down there,' pointing at a kraal on the plain some half-mile away, 'if you want to go and ask about it.'

'*Mr.* Muller,' said he, by way of correction, and with a curious contraction of the brow. '"Meinheer" is all very well for the Boers, but we are all Englishmen now. Well, the ox can wait. With your permission, I'll stop here till "Oom" Croft [Uncle Croft]

comes back,' and, without further ado, he jumped off his horse and, slipping the reins over its head as an indication to it to stand still, advanced towards Bessie with outstretched hand. As he did so the young lady plunged both her arms up to the elbow in the bath, and it struck John, who was observing the whole scene, that she did this in order to avoid the necessity of shaking hands with her stalwart visitor.

'Sorry my hands are wet,' she said, giving him a cold little nod. 'Let me introduce you, Mr. (with emphasis) Frank Muller—Captain Niel—who has come to help my uncle with the place.'

John stretched out his hand and Muller shook it.

'Captain,' he said interrogatively—'a ship captain, I suppose?'

'No,' said John, 'a Captain of the English Army.'

'Oh, a "rooibaatje" (red jacket). Well, I don't wonder at your taking to farming after the Zulu war.'

'I don't quite understand you,' said John, rather coldly.

'Oh, no offence, Captain, no offence. I only meant that you rooibaatjes did not come very well out of the war. I was there with Piet Uys, and it was a sight, I can tell you. A Zulu had only to show himself at night and one would see your regiments "skreck" [stampede] like a span of oxen when they wind a lion. And then they'd fire—ah, they did fire—anyhow, anywhere, but mostly at the clouds, there was no stopping them; and so, you see, I thought that you would like to turn your sword into a ploughshare, as the Bible says—but no offence, I'm sure—no offence.'

All this while John Niel, being English to his backbone, and cherishing the reputation of his profession almost as dearly as his own honour, was boiling with inward wrath, which was all the fiercer because he knew that there was some truth in the Boer's insults. He had the sense, however, to keep his temper—outwardly, at any rate.

'I was not in the Zulu war, Mr. Muller,' he said, and just then old Silas Croft came riding up, and the conversation dropped.

Mr. Frank Muller stopped to dinner and far on into the afternoon. His lost ox seemed to have entirely slipped his memory. There he sat close to the fair Bessie, smoking and drinking gin-and-water, and talking with great volubility in English sprinkled with Boer-Dutch terms that John Niel did not

understand, and gazing at the young lady in a manner which John somehow found unpleasant. Of course it was no affair of his, and he had no interest in the matter, but for all that he found the remarkable-looking Dutchman exceedingly disagreeable. At last, indeed, he could stand it no longer, and hobbled out for a little walk with Jess, who, in her abrupt way, offered to show him the garden.

‘You don’t like that man?’ she said to him, as they slowly went down the slope in front of the house.

‘No; do you?’

‘I think,’ replied Jess, slowly and with much emphasis, ‘that he is the most odious man that I ever saw and the most curious;’ and then she relapsed into silence, only broken now and again by an occasional remark about the flowers and trees.

Half an hour afterwards, when they arrived again at the top of the slope, Mr. Muller was just riding off down the avenue of blue-gums. By the verandah stood a Hottentot named Jantjé, who had been holding the Dutchman’s horse. He was a curious, wizened-up little fellow, dressed in rags, and with hair like the worn tags of a black woollen carpet. His age might have been anything between twenty-five and sixty; it was impossible to form any opinion on the point. Just now, however, his yellow monkey face was convulsed with an expression of intense malignity, and he was standing there in the sunshine cursing rapidly and beneath his breath in Dutch, and shaking his fist after the form of the retreating Boer—a very epitome of impotent overmastering passion.

‘What is he doing?’ asked John.

Jess laughed. ‘Jantjé does not like Frank Muller any more than I do, but I don’t know why. He will never tell me.’

(To be continued.)



BALZAC.

(1799-1850.)

I.

ONE afternoon in the month of June 1848 the actors of the Vaudeville Theatre at Paris were assembled in the green-room waiting impatiently. The clock marked 4.45 P.M. The note of convocation had indicated four o'clock precisely as the hour at which M. de Balzac would read his drama, 'La Marâtre.' Suddenly the door opened brusquely and M. de Balzac burst into the room, out of breath, and exclaimed, as he deposited his manuscript ostentatiously on the table, 'I am a little late, but I have come expressly from St. Petersburg to read my piece! You see I am still covered with snow.' And he shook his overcoat with conviction.

In 1821 Balzac, then aged twenty-two, and struggling, *in-vita Minerva*, to avoid by the fruits of his pen that distasteful career of notary which his parents desired him to embrace, wrote as follows to his dear sister, Mme. Laure de Survile—Laura soror: 'If there were only somebody to throw some charm or other over my cold existence! I have not the flowers of life, and yet I am in the season when they burst into bloom! What will be the good of fortune and enjoyments when my youth is passed? Of what avail are the actor's robes if he has no longer a *rôle* to play? An old man is a man who has dined and who watches the others eating. I am young, my plate is empty, and I am hungry! Laure, Laure, my two only and immense desires, *to be celebrated* and *to be loved*—will they ever be satisfied?'

We have here the keynotes of Balzac's strange, agitated, and glorious career: an imagination which dominated him so completely that his whole life was to a large extent a colossal hallucination; a boundless ambition which opened to him the vastest horizons in all the high spheres of life; a thirst for love which made him the hero of one of the purest and most lofty passions that have existed for the consolation and edification of humanity. It is from these three points of view that I propose to study very briefly certain phases of Balzac's life. In spite of all that has been written in French about the author of the 'Comédie

Humaine,' and in spite of all the compilations in English from French sources, the story of his life still remains to be told ; the errors, the contradictions, and the inventions of anecdote-mongers have still to be corrected and refuted ; and the narrative of the final crumbling of all his hopes and dreams, and of the fate of his family, of his papers, and of all his worldly and fleshly belongings, has hitherto been only referred to in newspaper paragraphs, for the most part as inexact as they were incomplete. The whole career of Balzac, viewed as we are now able to view it, with its alternate periods of misery and glory, of ruin and prosperity, of hope and despair ; his dream of fame and love ; and above all the curious family drama which a few years ago completed the history of his domestic life, offer the material of one of those strange and moving tales which none but Balzac himself could relate—another story of 'Illusions Perdues,' with the author himself for hero.

II.

Balzac, the observer, or rather, as Philarète Chasles first called him, *le voyant*, or the seer ; Balzac, the creator of the two thousand characters which figure in the 'Comédie Humaine' ; Balzac, who, after Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakspeare, Scarron, Molière, Lesage, Richardson, Walter Scott, and Beaumarchais, found new types like Balthazar Claes, Goriot, Grandet, Gobseck, Madame de Marneffe, Gaudissart, Hulot, Rastignac, Schmucke, Raphael of 'La Peau de Chagrin'—types to which his powerful imagination has given that ideal immortality of art which is equal at least to the immortality of history ; Balzac, the historian of the life, the manners, and the society of his epoch in all its material, moral, and psychological manifestations, needs no longer any panegyric : his name is graven for ever in the Pantheon of letters beside the greatest of the great. But at the price of what efforts, of what persistency of purpose, of what Herculean labours did he achieve that glorious immortality !

Balzac's father and mother destined him for the career of a notary, and educated him accordingly. When the young man was about to enter his twenty-first year, his parents questioned him as to his projects for the future, and Honoré de Balzac firmly declared his desire to become an author. 'My poor boy,' exclaimed his father at the end of an excited discussion, 'do you know whither the trade of a writer will infallibly lead you ? In

literature, you must be a king if you do not wish to be a beggar.' 'Very good,' replied Honoré, 'I will be a king!'

His parents, thinking that a dose of short commons and misery would bring their son to his senses, allowed him a bread-and-water *pension* in a garret which he hired, No. 9 Rue Lesdiguières, near the library of the Arsenal, where he proposed to work. At that time (1819) the Rue Lesdiguières was an isolated street in the Saint-Antoine quarter, inhabited only by working people. The garret, frequently referred to in Balzac's first letters to his sister Laure, is thus described by M. J. de Pétigny in an article published in *La France Centrale* of Blois in 1855:—

'When I arrived at the number indicated, I first thought that I was the victim of a practical joke. However, I ventured resolutely up a steep and dark staircase, and knocked in vain at several doors. The inhabitants were all at their daily work. One old woman, of whom I inquired for M. de Balzac, thought that I was making fun of her; another looked at me askance and took me for an agent of the police. Finally, I mounted to the very top, under the tiles, and there in despair I kicked open the last door, composed of a few planks loosely nailed together. A man's voice made itself heard. It was the voice of M. de Balzac. I entered a narrow garret, furnished with a worn-out cane-seated chair, a rickety table, and a wretched bed half-surrounded by two dirty curtains. On the table was an inkstand, a big pile of paper covered with writing, a jug of lemonade, a glass, and a crust of bread. In this den the heat was stifling, and the air was mephitic enough to give one cholera, if cholera had been invented at that time. Balzac was in bed, his head enveloped in a cotton nightcap of problematical colour. "You see," he said to me, "the dwelling which I have left but once during the past two months. During all that time I have remained here in bed working day and night at the great work for which I have condemned myself to this cenobite's life, and which I have now happily terminated, for my strength is exhausted."

The great work in question was a tragedy in verse called 'Cromwell,' written, by a curious coincidence, just at the time when Victor Hugo was finishing his 'Cromwell' and that famous preface which became the manifesto and literary *credo* of the young Romantic school. The reading of this tragedy before the assembled family proved to be a *fiasco*, and a venerable professor of the Ecole Polytechnique, whose opinion had been especially

solicited, declared that the author was 'fit for anything, except literature.' Balzac accepted this verdict only so far as regarded dramatic literature, and demanded another chance, which his parents unwillingly accorded. After fifteen months of starvation Balzac was allowed to return to the paternal roof, and in the course of the next five years, from 1822 to 1826, he produced more than forty volumes of fiction, which were published under various pseudonyms, the author regarding these works as mere essays and exercises in construction and composition. Then, always pursued by the desire to win independence, which the meagre sums he received from obscure publishers by no means afforded; haunted by a longing for that modest fortune which would assure him, as he writes to his sister, *la niche et la pâtée*, food and lodging, and enable him to work freely for glory—*travailler à ma célébrité*, as he puts it; Balzac launched into printing and publishing speculations which ended in disaster and burdened him with a debt which kept him for years and years working, like Sisyphus at his rock, toiling and moiling at a never-ending task. Finally, having returned under the whip of hard necessity to his vocation of letters, Balzac, being then just one year older than the century, published in 1829 'Les Chouans,' and that profoundly cynical and cruelly witty book, 'La Physiologie du Mariage.' His apprenticeship was at an end. The period of pseudonyms was past. He had at last produced something which he considered worthy to bear that name of Balzac, which he intended to render illustrious for the second time in the history of French literature.

How painful these beginnings were we may glean from hints in Balzac's correspondence, and from many autobiographical episodes intercalated in 'Facino Cane,' 'Louis Lambert,' 'La Peau de Chagrin,' and 'Le Lys dans la Vallée,' where Louis, Raphael, and Félix, in their childhood and youth at least, may be regarded as the doubles of Balzac. His was neither a happy childhood nor a flowery springtide, and perhaps there is no example of a literary vocation more hampered by the absence of literary faculty, or of a voluminous writer who produced so laboriously. Balzac, that vast brain, that penetrating physiologist, that profound observer, that marvellously intuitive mind, did not possess the literary gift; there was an abyss in his intellectual activity between the thought and its expression—an abyss which he vainly tried to fill up by throwing into it volume after volume and essay after essay. The forty volumes of his early years left

the abyss almost as profound as ever ; and even in the height of his talent and glory it was with infinite pains that he found expression for his thoughts, and only by dint of erasures and changes and additions which made his proof-sheets the despair of the printers and almost the ruin of his publishers. A less robust will would have been discouraged a thousand times, but Balzac had confidence in his genius when no one else had. He wished to be a great man, to be celebrated and to be loved, and his imagination enabled him to realise his schemes by incessant projections of that fluid, mightier than electricity, of which he has made such subtle analysis in 'Louis Lambert.' 'His head was boiling with ideas ; he had more ideas than he knew what to do with,' writes one who knew him, M. Edmond Texier (*Le Siècle*, Jan. 1884), 'but what worried him was the form. He wrestled with style as Jacob wrestled with the Angel. He used to cite such and such a chapter or page of his novels which he proposed to rewrite in view of the final edition of his works. This preoccupation of style pursued him throughout his life. A fortnight before his death a friend who had called to see him was trying to cheer him up by the prospect of a prompt recovery : "Heaven owes me that," he said, "for it would be too cruel to have to go away just at the very moment when I feel that I am fully master of my tools."

III.

After the failure of his printing establishment in the Rue des Marais St. Germain, now Rue Visconti, Balzac went to live successively in the Rue Tournon, No. 2, and then in the Rue Cassini, a quiet street near the Observatory. To pay his creditors he had no other funds to draw upon save his youth, his activity, his imagination, and his pen. At last his pen had become known ; editors and publishers came to knock at his door ; and henceforward his success goes on increasing. What his activity was the reader may conceive by consulting the chronological list of his works, books, studies, and miscellaneous articles, given by M. de Lovenjoul in his admirable work entitled 'Histoire des Œuvres de Balzac.' The enumeration of the titles of Balzac's writings between 1829 and 1832 fills five and a half large octavo pages, and includes the novels 'Les Chouans,' 'La Peau de Chagrin,' 'La Femme de Trente Ans,' and a score studies in the different series of provincial, private, and Parisian life, amongst which are some of his masterpieces. It

was in 1832 that he conceived the idea of collecting his works under various categories, extending those categories, and developing them into a colossal whole, 'La Comédie Humaine.' 'Salute me!' he cried joyously, when he announced his plan to his sister, Madame de Survile, 'I am simply becoming a genius!'

We have seen Balzac miserable and obscure in his garret in the Rue Lesdiguières. Now let us visit him in his crescent glory in the Rue Cassini, No. 1 (now No. 3). With his singular intuition of the inner workings of the commercial mind, aided by past experience, Balzac had come to the conclusion that as long as he seemed to be poor the publishers would certainly pay him but poor prices for his books. Now Balzac's dream in life was fortune; he wished to be a king of letters, and in his efforts to achieve this end he incidentally rendered his colleagues in the literary craft the immense service of emancipating them from the tyranny of the publishers and of establishing on a solid basis that excellent association for mutual protection, the 'Société des Gens de Lettres.' His own tactics in dealing with the publishers consisted in surrounding himself with great mystery, making himself inaccessible, and affecting a certain luxury in his interior. In this his imagination played a large rôle, and ended by completely mastering its master. In the Rue Cassini he already had a considerable collection of books all bound in red morocco with, on the covers, the arms of the d'Entragues family, from which his imagination made him out to be a lineal descendant, while his reason proved to him that this pretension was utterly without foundation. He also added to his name the nobiliary particle and became Honoré de Balzac, whereas his certificate of birth shows that the child born on May 20, 1799—not May 16 as all his biographers have wrongly stated—was named simply Honoré Balzac, son of Bernard François Balzac and Anne Charlotte Laure Sallambier his wife. It was in this dwelling, where he remained from 1829 to 1836, that Balzac first adopted that curious monachal costume, draped in which his figure will go down in history, thanks to the portrait by Louis Boulanger. This ample robe of white cashmere or white flannel, drawn in round the waist by a girdle, perhaps symbolised for Balzac the claustral life to which his labours condemned him; a Benedictine of fiction, he assumed the Benedictine's costume, and he continued to wear it ever afterwards. At this time our hero is in the height of his vigour and talent; his physical strength enables him to perform prodigies of

work ; his brain is teeming with projects ; he writes 'Le Père Goriot' in forty days, during which he slept altogether less than eighty hours ! In a gallery of his villa in the Rue Cassini, Balzac had a statue of Napoleon I., on the pedestal of which he had placed this inscription, the text of which, erroneously copied by all his biographers, is thus given by his friend the Comte Ferdinand de Gramont : ' Dominer l'Europe par la pensée comme il l'a dominée par l'épée, et ne pas mourir à Sainte-Hélène.'

Unlike Montaigne, Rousseau, Voltaire, and a thousand others who carefully handed down their memories to posterity, and, so to speak, composed during their lifetime their posthumous physiognomy and the attitude which they desired to assume before posterity, Balzac never gave a minute to the thought that one day people would wish to know something more about the man and his daily life than can be gathered from his books. The consequence is that his biographers are constantly at a loss for facts and explanations ; they find his life full of mystery. In 1831, for instance, Balzac conceived the idea of entering political life, and his imagination already shadowed forth a Balzac successively Deputy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Peer of France. He became candidate for the seat of Deputy at Cambrai and Angoulême, and failed miserably. But how, with his debt of 120,000fr., the result of his commercial *fiasco*, did Balzac contrive to fulfil the conditions of revenue necessary to become an elector and eligible to public affairs ?

In 1836 Balzac increased his debts by losing 25,000fr. in the purchase and disastrous publication of the review called 'La Chronique de Paris,' and retired apparently like a wild beast pursued by the hunters to a mysterious retreat, No. 13 Rue des Batailles, at Chaillot. Here the mystery thickens. Balzac cloistered himself so thoroughly in the Rue des Batailles that he did not even bear his own name ; you asked for Mme. Durand. Nevertheless, in spite of the debts, the luxury goes on increasing, according to contemporary accounts. Théophile Gautier, in his sketch of Balzac, and Werdet, the bookseller, in his 'Portrait intime de Balzac,' give a description of the author's study at this time which corresponds exactly with that of the splendid boudoir of 'La Fille aux Yeux d'Or,' and they speak of his whole lodging as being of a splendour worthy of a literary prince. What is the truth of the matter ? Was Balzac obliged, as the story runs, to surround himself with a triple cordon of sentinels ? In point of fact, I am

half inclined to believe that Balzac's imagination got the better of him even in the grave matters of his debts, and I again cite the testimony of M. de Gramont, who was constantly in Balzac's society at this time. Balzac, M. de Gramont told me, liked to astonish people and to work upon their imaginations. It is true there was a password. You asked for the widow Durand, and the door opened at once. But why the widow Durand? Was it on account of the creditors? A little, perhaps, but principally on account of the National Guard. The novelist was a deplorable citizen-soldier. To my mind the real explanation of Balzac's cloistral life at this time, apart from the desire not to be disturbed in his work, was the fear of being forced to mount guard. In Werdet's book will be found a wonderful story of his ingenious capture by the sergeant of his company, and of his imprisonment in the famous Hôtel des Haricots, where he happened to meet his rival in fame and luxury, Eugène Sue.

But all Balzac's life at this epoch would read like one of his own fantastic novels if it were related at length with all its strange episodes and details. Balzac had a carriage, with the arms of the d'Entragues painted on the doors, a splendid coachman, and a Lilliputian tiger; he had his box at the Opéra and the Italiens; he frequented the saloons of the aristocracy of birth, finance, and talent; he bought himself that famous cane, with a handle wrought by Froment-Meurice and enriched with diamonds and precious stones—the cane which Mme. de Girardin has celebrated in her novel 'La Canne de M. de Balzac,' and which afforded the subject of so much 'copy' for the minor journalists of the epoch. In short, Balzac became the lion of Paris and veritably a king of letters, as he had promised his father he would be.

In 1838 Balzac bought at Ville d'Avray the villa of 'Les Jardies,' so amusingly described by Gozlan, and which became especially famous of late years as the country house of Gambetta. Then, towards the end of 1840, he went to live at Passy, in a house now No. 47 Rue Raynouard, where he remained until 1847, working calmly and gloriously. In 1845 the fat ox promenaded through the streets of Paris on Shrove Tuesday in the butchers' carnival procession was called the *Père Goriot*, in proof of the author's immense popularity, and the same year he was nominated Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Even his critics now began to cease insulting and depreciating him, and his rivals themselves were forced to recognise his genius. So far as his celebrity was

concerned, Balzac had realised his fondest wishes, and as regards wealth he was not in such a precarious condition as the legend would lead us to suppose. His house at Passy was full of objects of art, amongst which was a cabinet which Balzac declared had belonged to Marie de Medicis, and for which he professed to have paid 10,000fr. 'Did Balzac really pay 10,000fr. for this piece of furniture?' I asked M. de Gramont. 'Heu! heu!' he replied, 'I hardly think so. But Balzac listened so often to his prodigious imagination that he finally came to deceive himself honestly and *bonâ fide*.' Balzac had an insurmountable tendency to exaggerate, and, as Gozlan tells us, whenever by chance he happened to talk about some serious establishment where he would retire when he became very rich, his imagination would construct it 'in proportions so colossal and so splendid that Solomon would have retreated as rapidly as his sandals would have permitted before the enormity of the expense.' However, in 1847, he was able to buy a house at the corner of the Rue Fortunée, now Rue Balzac, which had once been the residence of the financier Beaujon. In this mysterious retreat Théophile Gautier found Balzac living in the midst of old furniture, bibelots, books, objects of art of all kinds, porcelain, and pictures. 'You see we were right in saying that you are a millionaire,' exclaimed Gautier laughingly, in presence of these treasures. 'I am poorer than ever,' replied Balzac; 'nothing here belongs to me. I have furnished the house for a friend. I am only the guardian and porter of the dwelling.' This mystery was shortly afterwards explained by the marriage of Balzac with Mme. Evelina de Hanska.

IV.

Balzac not only realised his dream of wealth and celebrity, but also his dream of love. The story of his marriage is as romantic as the rest of his career. One morning in 1833, shortly after the publication of 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' Balzac received by post a package which contained a letter and a copy of the 'Imitation of Christ.' The letter was grave, dignified, and tender. The writer begged M. de Balzac to accept this strange testimony of admiration, and expressed regret that distance and other circumstances rendered an interview impossible with the man of genius who had written such admirable pages. Balzac did not confound this letter with the scores of commonplace epistles which he was

in the habit of receiving daily from misunderstood feminine souls in every department of France. He felt that the writer was no ordinary woman ; he had a presentiment of the angelic influence which was destined to illuminate his laborious existence ; and at the first opportunity he posted off to Neufchâtel, where the writer of the letter, Evelina de Hanska, *née* Countess Rzewuska, was then living. This lady belonged to one of the most glorious families of Poland, a family that counted amongst its ancestors the illustrious politician and writer Wenceslas Rzewuski, who was Hetman and Grand-General of Poland under Stanislas Augustus in 1752. Her brother, the Count Henri Rzewuski, was a novelist and poet of the first order. Her sister was the wife of the poet Jules Lacroix, and her *salon* in the Rue d'Anjou St. Honoré has been one of the most remarkable and select literary *salons* in the Paris of the nineteenth century. Born in 1804, the Countess Rzewuska was married in 1818 to a Russian gentleman, the Count de Hanski, who left her a widow in 1847 with one daughter, who married the Count Henri Mnischek. When Balzac first made her acquaintance in 1833 she seemed to him to realise the ideal of *la femme de trente ans*, whose praises he had been the first amongst novelists to celebrate. Her face was beautiful, the features being fine, longish, and of aristocratic distinction, tempered with an expression of kindness and vivacious intelligence, which remained even in the portraits which I have seen where she is represented at a more advanced and sadder period of her life. But at that time, just when her figure was beginning to yield to the *embonpoint* of second youth, she must have possessed great physical charm, and we can understand Balzac's enthusiastic praises of this lady, whom he so often refers to in his correspondence as the 'incomparable diamond of Poland,' and the 'jewel of that old and illustrious family of Rzewuski.' But what was Balzac's delight to find that Mme. de Hanska was not merely a charming woman, but a woman of encyclopædic acquirements and singular intelligence ! The reader may remember the terms in which he dedicated his novel 'Modeste Mignon' to this lady : 'Daughter of an enslaved soil, an angel in love, a child in faith, an old man in experience, a man in intellect, a woman in heart, a giant in hope, a mother in grief, a poet of my dreams, to thee this work,' &c.

This first interview, due as it was to such uncommon circumstances, was the beginning of an attachment which had the most profound influence on Balzac's life and works. Henceforward

none of his important books saw the light without having passed through the hands of Mme. de Hanska. Her advice purified, corrected, and enriched the illustrious novelist's work ; she became a veritable collaborator of the 'Comédie Humaine,' many episodes of which, and whole chapters of 'Seraphita,' 'Modeste Mignon,' and 'Les Paysans,' are undoubtedly to be attributed to her pen. During the period of the most brilliant manifestation of his genius, Balzac's affections were centred in this extraordinary woman, who soon became his 'dearly beloved sovereign,' the consolation, the hope, the sun of his life. From the day when they first met at Neufchâtel their destinies were united, and mere admiration and friendship rapidly changed on both sides into a profound and tender passion, the development of which may be traced in the exquisitely delicate and noble letters contained in Balzac's published correspondence. Mme. de Hanska lived with her husband at Wierzchownia, in Russian Poland ; Balzac remained at Paris. But during the sixteen years that this idyl of love lasted, though separated by enormous distances, their communication was not entirely by correspondence ; they met on several occasions. Mme. de Hanska made one appearance at Paris, and Balzac thought nothing of posting off to Poland or Russia or Vienna to feast his eyes on the sight of his intellectual second self. One night at 'Les Jardies' he woke up one of his friends who was sleeping profoundly. 'Will you not come with me ? I am going to start,' said Balzac. 'And where are you going at this time of night ?' asked his friend in astonishment. 'To Poland ; will you accompany me ?' 'No.' 'Well, then, good-night !' 'And you a pleasant journey !' On his return, not long afterwards, Balzac met his friend, and the first thing he said to him was, 'Ah ! my dear friend, I only saw her for a few moments ! But what bliss to have seen her !'

Everything that concerns Balzac's life is mysterious, but this attachment to Mme. de Hanska seems to me to give us the key to many points that are otherwise incomprehensible. First of all it helps to explain his Herculean literary labours and that intemperance of toil which, while fatally undermining his health, yet enabled him to produce such a prodigious quantity of work and to carry so far towards completion the immense edifice of the 'Comédie Humaine.' The legend says that he was continually struggling against an ever-increasing mass of debts, and, it must

be admitted, Balzac himself carefully avoided discouraging the propagators of this legend. On the other hand, his intimate friend, Gozlan, warns us against the tricks of Balzac's imagination, and declares once for all that these famous debts never exceeded a quite ordinary amount, '*un total assez bourgeois.*' Furthermore, it needs only a moment's reflection to see that the sum which Balzac received for the work of the sixteen most brilliant and fertile years of his career sufficed over and above to pay off his debts, even together with all the augmentations due to usurers' accommodation bills, and at the same time to provide for his daily needs and for his occasional freaks of luxury and sumptuosity. The proof of this is that he was able to buy himself a country house at Ville d'Avray and a town house at Paris, to say nothing of books, pictures, and objects of art, about which latter, it is true, we may have to make reserves, but which, nevertheless, represented money spent. At the time of Balzac's death the contents of his house at the corner of the Rue Fortunée were estimated at 80,000fr. To my mind the explanation of Balzac's immense efforts is his old double thirst for celebrity and love. 'To devote myself to the happiness of a woman is my perpetual dream,' he wrote to his sister in his earlier years. He had now found the woman of his dreams, and he worked in the hope of one day laying his glory and his millions at her feet. This happy day came at last; Mme. de Hanska was left a widow in 1847, and, after having seen her daughter Anna married to the Count Mniszech, and having settled her affairs in Poland, she became the wife of Honoré de Balzac. The marriage was celebrated on March 14, 1850, at Wierzchownia, and the patient lover was at last able to announce 'the happy *dénouement* of that grand and fine drama of the heart which has lasted sixteen years. Three days ago I married the only woman that I ever loved, whom I love more than ever, and whom I shall love unto death. This union is, I believe, the reward which God held in reserve for so much adversity, so many years of labour, so many difficulties encountered and surmounted. I have had neither a happy youth nor a flowery spring; I shall have the most brilliant summer, the sweetest of all autumns.'

The happy couple returned to Paris in May 1850, and took possession of the mysterious house in the Rue Fortunée of which Balzac had told Gautier that he was simply the guardian and

porter. On August 19, 1850, Balzac died of heart disease, aggravated by years of excessive brain-work and of abuse of the stimulus of coffee.¹

V.

The history of Mme. de Balzac after her husband's death is enveloped in as thick a veil of enigma as Balzac's own life. Before her marriage with the novelist she made over all her fortune to her daughter, who had become the Countess George Mniszech, but the inheritance of Balzac's literary property gave her a handsome source of income, which, as the publisher Calmann-Lévy can testify, she knew how to administer to the best advantage. The Count and Countess Mniszech and Mme. de Balzac formed a common household and spent their time partly in Poland, partly at various Continental watering places, and partly at Paris, where Balzac's private rooms and relics were made the object of the most pious cult on the part of his widow. In 1862 Mme. de Balzac bought the Château de Beauregard, at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, which henceforward became her favourite summer residence, and until 1875 nothing remarkable appears to have occurred in the private history of the trio.

In 1875 Mme. de Balzac and her son-in-law, the Count Mniszech, charged an eminent architect, M. Eugène Monnier, with the task of transforming the portion of the old Folie Beaujon which had become their property at the death of Balzac, in such a manner as to adapt it to the requirements of modern life, and to recall the memory of the author of 'La Comédie Humaine.' M. Monnier, seeking inspiration in the architecture of the sixteenth century, and in the finest monuments of the Italian Renaissance, composed a palace which he intended to make his masterpiece, and the plans and drawings of which, exhibited in part at the Salons of 1883 and 1884, won him a medal and the most flattering notices in the press. The interior was to have

¹ Balzac left no direct descendants. His father and mother are, of course, dead; his brother Henri, who emigrated, is dead; his younger sister, Laurence, who married M. de Montraigne, died in 1827, five years after her marriage; his elder sister, Laure, who married M. de Surville, died leaving two daughters, Valentine and Sophie, who are both dead. The former married M. Duhamel, who was formerly Secretary of M. Grévy, the President of the Republic, and died in 1882, leaving a son and a daughter. The son, who has inherited many souvenirs and documents relative to Balzac, is preparing a volume on his illustrious great-uncle.

remained just as it was when Balzac lived and worked there on the eve of the realisation of his splendid dream, but the façade on the present Rue Balzac was to have been completely transformed and unified. The central pavilion was to have comprised a sort of apotheosis of Balzac. A monumental bas-relief would have represented Renown crowning the immortal novelist, while above an empty niche flanked by ornaments suggested by the funereal forms of certain details of the Château d'Anet would have intimated that Balzac had died within these walls. Only a portion of this project was executed—namely, the pavilion and staircase forming the corner of the Rue Balzac and the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, and hardly had this portion been roofed in when the works were stopped, the windows and doors were boarded up, and the walls left a prey to the bill-posters and the inscriptions of the street boys. The old house of Balzac, with its walls covered with cracks and weird fissures, and, beside it, this fragment of a grandiose palace dishonoured by a leprosy of many-coloured posters, became an image of ruin and desolation in the heart of one of the most wealthy and magnificent quarters of Paris—a fantastic and enigmatical structure such as Balzac loved to describe in his novels, and to make the scene of complicated domestic tragedies.

The next chapter of the history of Mme. de Balzac is the beginning of the end. 'In virtue of an order of the President of the Civil Tribunal of Corbeil, dated February 9, 1882,' the Château de Beauregard and all the furniture, pictures, books, objects of art, &c., which it contained were sold by auction. The sale took place in March, and lasted seven days. Already in the beginning of the year 1882 Balzac's house at Paris had been sold for half a million of francs to the Baroness Solomon de Rothschild, and several anonymous sales of pictures had been made on the account of the Mniszech household at the Hôtel Drouot. On April 10, 1882, Mme. de Balzac died, and almost before her coffin had been carried out of the house the bailiffs took possession, and everything was carried down to the Hôtel Drouot and sold 'by order of justice.' In 1875 the Hanska-Mniszech trio possessed a fortune which may fairly be termed immense, inasmuch as their annual income amounted to some 600,000fr. How such a fortune could have been utterly dissipated in the course of five or six years it is not easy to explain.

The Comte Mniszech, who became paralysed towards the end

of his life, died in December 1881. During his last years he was a nonentity in his household, and Mme. Mniszech, under those mysterious physical influences which often manifest themselves at the so-called turn of life, contracted a curious *liaison* which almost leads us to doubt her sanity. Furthermore, she and her mother appear to have had their heads turned by the splendour of the Universal Exhibition of 1878, where they made the most extravagant purchases, particularly in the Chinese and Japanese departments. Henceforward the two women were carried along by the mania of buying and collecting, availing themselves of all the opportunities which Paris affords for satisfying such a craze. Pictures, books, bric-à-brac, furniture, Japanese and Chinese curiosities, tapestries, diamonds—all equally fascinated their desire, and the aristocratic mansion in the Rue Balzac became a regular store-room like the bric-à-brac den in 'La Peau de Chagrin.' They bought and bought. Their bill at one picture-dealer's amounted to two millions of francs; at half a dozen other dealers they had as many bills of a million; at Boucheron's they owed a million and a half for diamonds. Naturally the creditors began to feel alarmed, and as their bills remained unpaid some of them tried to recover their goods. What was their astonishment to find that part, if not all, had disappeared! Mme. Mniszech had resold at low prices many of the pictures which she had bought without paying for them! Such a crazy dance of millions had not been heard of at Paris before; the legal authorities and the *conseil de famille* intervened, and a delay of one month was obtained to enable Mme. de Balzac and her daughter to endeavour to put their affairs in order. Just four days before this month expired Mme. de Balzac died, and thus, immediately after the funeral was over, the bailiffs invaded the house and ransacked boxes, drawers, and cupboards, even turning topsy-turvy the three rooms occupied by Balzac, which his widow had so religiously preserved. Half a dozen boxes were broken open; one contained empty jewel cases, and the others papers and letters. Two of these boxes were sent to the Hôtel Drouot with the books and furniture to be sold; the others were emptied on the floor. M. de Lovenjoul, the bibliographer of Balzac, entered the house at this moment. The doors were wide open, and he had only to walk in. M. de Lovenjoul tried to prevent the sending of the two boxes of papers to the Hôtel Drouot, but in vain. However, he succeeded the next day in rescuing them and sending them back to the house,

but they were already half empty. But this was not all : as soon as the bailiffs left the house the neighbours walked in. The house of Balzac had been for more than thirty years the *maison mystérieuse*, and naturally this opportunity of satisfying their curiosity was not neglected by all the gossips and shopkeepers of the quarter, who trooped in, and, finding no other prey, helped themselves to the letters, family papers, manuscripts, and notes of Balzac that lay trampled under foot on the floors of the dining- and drawing-rooms. The friends of the family did not know of this sacrilegious visit until the following day. They arrived in haste, hoping to save the rest of the papers, but in the interval the only servant left in the house had asked Mme. Mniszech what was to be done with them, and she had replied in despair, 'Burn them!' And twenty-four hours afterwards the keys of the desecrated house of genius were handed over to Mme. de Rothschild, who had for many years been coveting this corner lot, which marred the symmetry of her princely mansion and gardens.

VI.

The sale of Balzac's library at the Hôtel Drouot was a sad spectacle, heartrending to the bibliophile. 'Contrary to certain literary celebrities who feed only on their own genius,' as Gautier tells us in his biographical study of the author of 'La Comédie Humaine,' 'Balzac read much, and with prodigious rapidity. He loved books, and had formed for himself a fine library.' At his death this library contained at least 6,000 volumes, which Mme. de Balzac inherited, and which were sold after her death, like the rest of his effects, 'by order of justice, and for the benefit of the creditors.' Only about one-sixth of the books was catalogued ; the rest were sold in lots, and the sale lasted at the Hôtel Drouot nearly a fortnight, taking place now in one room, now in another, and finally on the dirty floor of the courtyard. The sale began on April 25, 1882, in Room No. 6 of the Hôtel Drouot. I remember following the sale with sad interest in all its summary brutality. A man of law, plump, rosy, neatly be-whiskered, a *lorgnon* perched daintily on a nose whose lines reminded one of the types of Daumier—a nose that betrayed beneath a superficial envelope of humanity the aquiline beak of the bird of prey—a man of law, administrator of the estate, stood beside the auctioneer to watch over the interests of the creditors. Those eternal

creditors hovering like dung-flies over the remnants of ruin! At the desk, the auctioneer's clerk, and at his side a hatchet-faced, hawk-eyed, sharp-voiced, and restless creature, the auctioneer! Around the brick-red painted walls of the room were rows of books on shelves, books packed in heaps, books forming columns and pilasters, and running up the walls at intervals to a height of ten or fifteen feet, books flung pell-mell in corners, for, in the hurry of Justice to attain her ends, there was no time for careful arrangement. A score of very precious volumes were displayed in a glass case on the baize-covered counter which separates the 'expert' and the 'crier' from the crowd of bidders—a motley gang of dealers, amongst whom were a few amateurs and bibliophiles. Not even the weather favoured this last episode in the existence of Balzac's library! It rained heavily; an odour of damp cloth filled the room; the umbrellas traced rivulets on the floor; and the atmosphere was of that frowsy and indescribable quality peculiar to the great Parisian auction rooms on a wet day. The very chairs ran short, and not more than a score of people could find seats. The rest had to stand. 'Que voulez-vous? C'est une vente judiciaire!'

The great event of the first day was the sale of twelve original manuscripts of Balzac's novels, together with a number of volumes of corrected proofs. Nothing could be more interesting to the literary student than the sight of those successive series of proofs, proceeding by continual erasures, corrections, additions, and amplifications written on the broad margins, and, when the margins were not big enough, on scraps of paper of all shapes and sizes, stuck on with pins or wafers. The first proof contains the embryonic idea of a page or a chapter in a dozen short lines in the middle of a large blank sheet; the last proof—often the tenth in number—contains the finished work, the page in its definitive form. But Balzac's manner of working has been so often described, so many anecdotes have been told about his proofs causing the despair of the printers, and his incessant corrections leading his publishers to bankruptcy, that I need not go over that ground again. Here they were, those famous manuscripts! Here were those proofs over which Balzac had spent nights and nights of labour! The manuscripts formed thin quarto or small folio volumes, in half or full morocco bindings; the proofs were bulky, plethoric volumes in less splendid clothing. On the first sheet of the manuscript of 'Cæsar Birotteau' was a pen-and-ink

portrait of the illustrious perfumer by Balzac. The manuscript of the 'Contes Drolatiques' was profusely enriched with drawings from Balzac's pen. The manuscript of 'Eugénie Grandet' bore this dedication: 'Offert par l'auteur à Madame de Hanska, en témoignage de son respectueux attachement, 24 Décembre, 1833: Genève, H. de Balzac;' while on the cover were some calculations—*comptes mélancoliques*, as Balzac used to call them—the total for this or that month, the total of his floating debt, the deficit, &c., a maze of figures in which reality is strangely mingled with dreams of wealth never to be realised. This manuscript was knocked down at 2,000fr., the highest sum attained for any of the twelve that were sold, and, like most of the other items of the sale, it passed into the hands of Parisian dealers, instead of finding a resting place, as it deserved, in the National Library beside the manuscripts of Corneille and the autograph of Molière. As for the rest of the papers, letters, and manuscripts that were sold, stolen, or trodden under foot, many were saved by M. de Lovenjoul, notably the manuscripts of 'Sœur Marie des Anges' and 'Les Héritiers Boirouge,' so frequently referred to in Balzac's correspondence. M. de Lovenjoul bought them back from a small shopkeeper of the Faubourg St. Honoré, who had appropriated them on the day when the house was invaded by an indiscreet crowd of neighbours. Mme. Jules Lacroix, the sister of Mme. de Balzac, is also understood to have had in her possession many of Balzac's letters which will probably be published in due time; but no exact statement can be made on this point, Mme. Lacroix having been almost as great a lover of mystery as her sister.

In the confusion and general financial rout of the Hanska-Mniszech household, the collection of pictures and objects of art which Balzac himself made was dispersed in a manner which we cannot control. His bookcases alone can be traced: they are described by Gautier as a series of Boule cupboards inlaid with brass and tortoiseshell, and they were bought in 1882 by an admirer of Balzac for the paltry sum of 500fr., about one-thirtieth of the price which Balzac probably paid for them! As for the pictures, described in 'Cousin Pons,' and other marvels referred to in various other novels, and which Balzac's biographers profess to identify with objects which he himself possessed, there is every reason to believe that they were neither so genuine nor so splendid as Balzac believed. That terrible imagination was

constantly playing him tricks, and, just as it enabled him honestly to deceive himself, so we may readily believe it enabled him to involuntarily deceive others. When Gautier or Gozlan had Balzac's marvellous eyes fixed upon them—those eyes which Gautier describes as two black diamonds, full of light and magnetism, eyes that would make an eagle's eye blink ; eyes that would tame a furious wild beast and make him crouch, the eyes of a sovereign, of a seer, of a charmer, when they fell under the fascination of his look and his voice, we can understand how he carried them away into the brilliant dreamland of fancy, where his own mind habitually lingered. He told them that he possessed treasures, he described those treasures, related their history, detailed their beauties, and his hearers could not do otherwise than believe him ; for, as the late Bibliophile Jacob says, 'he was truly a charmer and an enchanter. Never have I heard more captivating conversation than his.'

VII.

Such was the end of Balzac's dream of celebrity, love, and fortune, and such the romantic and painful *dénouement* of the tragi-comedy of his life. By a strange fatality, Money, that *deus ex machinâ* of his 'Comédie Humaine,' Money, that demon which he pursued throughout his life with the persistency of a Redskin and the passion of one possessed, intervened to trouble the last days of the extraordinary woman who had been his consolation and his guiding star, and who was saved only by death from seeing the desecration of that shrine in which she had for thirty-two years piously ministered to the cult of one of the rarest geniuses that France ever possessed. The 'star of Poland' died unpeacefully in 1882 ; the Count Mniszech died mad and half-paralysed a few months before his mother-in-law ; the Countess Mniszech—'cette chère enfant, la joie de toute une maison,' to whom Balzac dedicated 'Pierrette'—is now living in wretched solitude in a Parisian lodging-house ; and the desolate house of Balzac and the empty fragment of a palace at the side have become the property of one who in the pride of her millions intends, it is said, to leave not one stone upon another either of the palace or of the house which was the novelist's home !

When Balzac was living in his garret in the Rue Lesdiguières, alone with his dreams of ambition, one of his rare recreations was

to walk in the *Jardin des Plantes* or in the cemetery of *Père-Lachaise*. From the summit of the hill of the City of Death we can imagine him contemplating the marvellous panorama of living Paris that lay at his feet, and as his eyes wandered over that ocean of roofs which cover so much luxury and so much misery, so many intrigues and so many passions, we can hear him flinging his proud challenge in the face of the mighty city and exclaiming, in the words of *Rastignac* at the end of the '*Père Goriot*,' '*Et maintenant à nous deux!*' How gloriously *Balzac* comforted himself in the long and fierce struggle is manifested by that severe monument in the cemetery of *Père-Lachaise*, on which we read, beneath a bust of the novelist by *David d'Angers*, the simple inscription '*Balzac*', and on the open book below the immortal title of '*La Comédie Humaine*'.

STAGE-EFFECTS.

CHAPTER I.



have induced old Fanshawe (who never was old, for he died at thirty odd) to marry her, though I cannot say it has ever been any wonder at all to me, or to any one else I ever heard of, who knew my mother-in-law, that he did not live to see forty. *She killed him!*

Not with fair, honest, open, and above-board killing, say a knife, or a few grains of arsenic, or rat poison—a tangible something which might have been taken hold of and ended in a hanging. Oh no! but with that unruly member, the tongue; with perpetual talkings and naggings and moanings, with long-winded prayers at him and his unregenerate condition alike, at all times and all seasons, suitable and unsuitable, and invariably at morn and eventide, to the agony of poor old Fanshawe, the pity of a couple of maid-servants, and the exquisite enjoyment of a little impudent imp in buttons, who made a practice of calling his mistress a kind

HE was without exception the most intensely disagreeable old woman I ever came across. Worse luck! she was also my mother-in-law.

She was tall, with a certain fineness and dignity of presence, with well-drawn aquiline features, a pair of cold grey eyes, that were capable of going through and through one like a pair of gimlets, and a thin-lipped mouth like a steel trap. She was not an old woman—fifty or thereabouts—yet somehow every one called her ‘old Mrs. Fanshawe’—it might have been in contradistinction to young Mrs. Fanshawe at the other end of the town; that is, Jack’s wife.

It was often a source of great wonder to me that anything could

Christian lady to her face, and behind her back declared 'Missus is a 'rrorr ; and I wish as 'ow bogle-bo would come down the chimney some night and carry 'er orf—that I do.' 'Carry 'er orf,' Jane Bell, the cook, would exclaim, mimicking the little imp's Cockney tongue. Cook rules over my digestion now, and it was from her that I learnt all the details of Molly's unhappy childhood. God bless her, the kind soul ! she stood by my poor crushed little dove through all those unhappy years, and I mean to stand by her to the end of the chapter. 'Carry 'er orf ! Why, it's fair shameful to hear her a-carrying on at master as she does. She'll kill him, and then she'll be satisfied. I believe that's what she wants, that she may bring that sneaking rat-faced parson here instead of him !'

Kill him she eventually did, but not soon enough. By the time poor Bob Fanshawe had learnt at last what peace was, that rat-faced parson, otherwise the Reverend Septimus Bloggs, had taken unto himself a wife, and was therefore ineligible for the situation Mrs. Fanshawe had to offer. So Mrs. Fanshawe promptly canonised poor Bob, changing him from an unregenerate sinner to her blessed saint in heaven ; and then she set herself to try and do her three children, as she had done their father, to death.

She was very religious, but that was neither here nor there !

Of these three children there were two girls and a boy—Elizabeth, John, and Mary. At the time of their father's death, Elizabeth was eleven, John ten, and Mary but two years old. There had been other children intervening who had succumbed to treatment as their father did after them. The two elder ones were, however, sturdy healthy youngsters, taking largely after their mother in constitution. Little Mary was delicate, like her father, and, had it not been for the imperative intervention of the family doctor, would assuredly have been a cherub long before I had the felicity of meeting her, and laying myself down, mind, body, and estate, at her little feet.

When that blessed event came about she was just eighteen, a sweet timid little dove, with soft coaxing ways, a tangle of fair bright hair, a pair of great mild blue eyes, and the dearest little pug of a nose in the world. To this day I never look at Molly without thanking a merciful Providence that she did not inherit the finely artistic lines of her mother's countenance, but had had sufficient sense, even at that early stage of her existence, to take after her father.

Jack was different—in fact, Jack was a complete mixture of both parents—a fine fellow, very, with his mother's nose, which sat very well on his father's fair bright face. And Jack had the best medical practice in Little Barton and the neighbourhood, for here the father's sweetness and the mother's dogged resolution and severity stood him in good stead.

For his mother Jack didn't care a rap. He used to laugh in her face when she talked at him, and tell her old ladies should keep to their church-work and not interfere with matters they knew nothing about. Jack had married to please himself, a sharp bright little woman, who didn't care a snap of her plump little fingers for her mother-in-law, or any one else's.

Elizabeth was a married woman when I first knew them—Mrs. Septimus Bloggs, wife of the rector of Little Barton. Yes; the very same man, ay, and the very same woman too, for Elizabeth Bloggs was the fac-simile, the counter-part, the synonym of her charming mother over again. Cook says when the first Mrs. Septimus Bloggs took a weary leave of this world, Mrs. and Miss Fanshawe had a hand-to-hand fight for the rector, and Elizabeth won. It was rather a pity for poor Septimus Bloggs, for he being twenty years older than Elizabeth cannot reasonably expect to outlive her, while had he stuck to the mother he would have been a free man long ago—not but that it serves him right for marrying either of them.

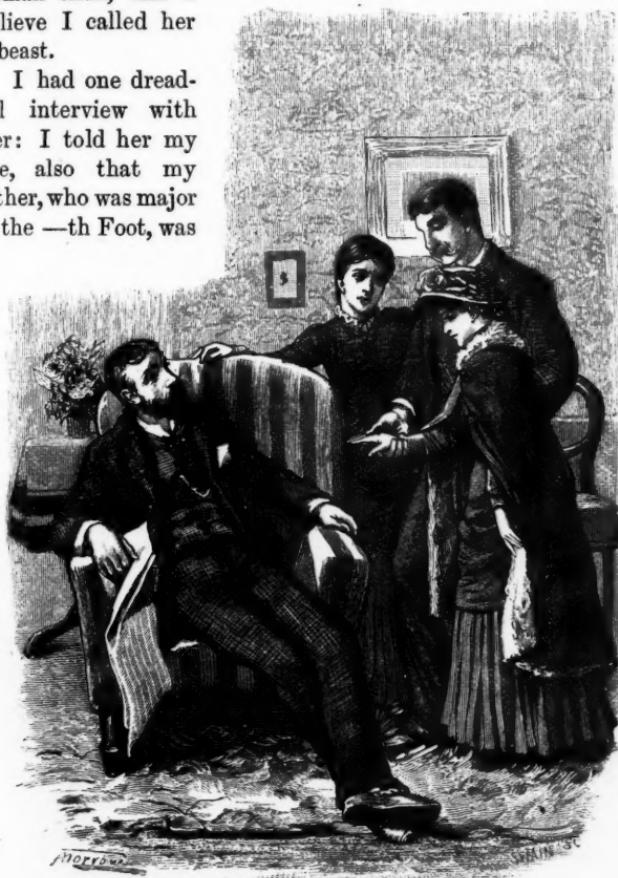
Well, such was the Fanshawe family, as I first knew it—that is, when I, William Manners, went to Little Barton in the capacity of agent to the squire, Sir Hugh Brande, of the Hall. I was then just seven-and-twenty, a big muscular man, not bad-looking, a good shot, easy in the saddle, fair with my fists, and a neat hand at billiards, with, at all events, sense enough to fall in love with Molly Fanshawe, and a good enough man all round for her to fall in love with me.

I used to see a good deal of her at Jack's, and of a truth I didn't let the matter hang long on hand—I asked her one soft summer night, out in the garden behind Jack's substantial house, and Molly—God bless my darling!—said yes.

Lord, how happy I was that night! We went in and imparted the news, Jack wrung my hand nearly off, and Mrs. Jack just flung her arms around my neck and kissed me heartily, said she *was* so pleased, that Molly was a lucky girl, and the dearest, sweetest, and best in the wide world. I, of course, agreed with her.

And then that old harridan smashed all by saying No, by looking No, by meaning No, and by keeping to No—she would have said religiously. She is dead and gone, and we are told to speak no ill of the dead. I don't wish to do it, but I did hate that woman then, and I believe I called her a beast.

I had one dreadful interview with her: I told her my age, also that my father, who was major of the —th Foot, was



killed during the Crimea—at which she drew down her steel trap of a mouth and remarked that it was no credit to him. I told her that I had a hundred and fifty a year of my own, which I proposed to settle upon Molly, and that I had four hundred a year from Sir Hugh Brande; I likewise added the information that I loved Molly dearly, and that Molly loved me.

Mrs. Fanshawe waived that question altogether. She said she could not deny that at present I had a very good situation (as if I were a butler), but that, of course, I was liable to be dismissed at any moment that I chanced to displease my master (I began to dislike Mrs. Fanshawe very thoroughly at this point), and, moreover, that she regarded worldly wealth as a very secondary consideration; she had promised her dear saint in heaven to supply his place to their children, and with regard to Mary—she never called her Molly—her mind was quite made up. She would not be here long, she felt that her pilgrimage was almost at an end, and before laying down the worn-out garment of the soul her intention was to consign her weak and wayward little daughter into the safe keeping of the bosom of the Church.

‘Good heavens!’ I cried: ‘are you going to force her into a convent?’

Mrs. Fanshawe smiled in a superior kind of way, as if in pity for my ignorance.

‘Certainly not. You misunderstand me. I am not one of those who see great merit in celibacy. When I spoke of the bosom of the Church, I referred to Mary’s approaching marriage with our good assistant-priest, Mr. Stamper.’

‘Do you *mean* it?’ I demanded incredulously.

‘Certainly I mean it, Mr. Manners,’ she answered.

‘You will marry Molly to that miserable little whippersnapper—that—that beardless, mindless, bloodless little puppet, that dressed-up ape in a white gown with his yellow eyes turned up into his head, with his miserable weak whining sniffle of a voice? You will force your young daughter into the arms of a wretched cock-sparrow like that?’ I cried.

‘You are losing your temper, Mr. Manners,’ remarked Mrs. Fanshawe calmly.

Losing it! That was a polite way of putting it—my temper was already lost, clean gone.

‘Never mind my temper, Mrs. Fanshawe,’ I said, trying hard to be cool and collected. ‘Do you know that Mr. Stamper has sore eyes and that his hands are clammy?’

Mrs. Fanshawe drew herself up stiffly.

‘Mr. Manners, your remarks are disgusting. They are not fit for a lady to hear.’

‘If they are not fit for an *old* lady to hear,’ I cried triumphantly, ‘what will they be for a *young* lady to experience? If

my remarks are disgusting, so are those two particular personal peculiarities of Mr. Stamper's, very disgusting—I have thought so myself many a time. I never shake hands with him if I can help it—if I have to, why, I always wipe my hand as soon as I can.'

'You insult me,' she gasped, rising.

I rose too. As she grew warm I, happily, grew cool; I always do that.

'At any time of your life, would you have *liked* to marry Stamper?' I demanded.

'When a priest of the Church militant invites a young and inexperienced girl like Mary to share his lot in life, *it—is—in . . . deed—an—HONOUR*,' she answered.

I could not help it: I said, 'Oh, Lord!' and then I went out and left the old cat—*Victrix*.

I never saw Molly. I found out from Mrs. Jack that she was a prisoner locked in her bedroom. They comforted me—she and Jack—all they could; but what was my comfort when none could reach her? I positively could not endure their kindness, but went back to my room to bear my pain alone. It was the worst pain I had ever known.

It was growing dark when there came a gentle tap-tap on the door, and Mrs. Fanshawe's cook, Jane Bell, entered.

'I hope you won't think me very wrong, sir,' she began—'I dare say it is; but she's been crying her heart out, poor lamb, and I thought if a bit of a note——'

'Give it to me—oh! you good woman, oh! you good woman,' I cried, understanding at last.

I read my darling's bit of a note, written in pencil on half a sheet of paper, telling me she would die before she would marry Stamper, and asking me would I promise to wait for her till she was twenty-one.

Would I wait?

I wrote an answer as plain as the question, saying I would wait till doomsday if need be. And Jane Bell took it back with her.

Jane Bell took a good many things backwards and forwards after that—paper, pens, ink, bon-bons, books, and the like, bringing me letters in return. All through the time, nearly three years, which passed before Molly was of an age to please herself as to whom she should marry, this went on.

During all that time the old woman's vigilance never relaxed ; never once did Molly go outside the door without her mother, and never once, to my knowledge, was she left in the house alone. Yet I saw her sometimes, for Jane Bell was a very good friend to both of us. They were very sweet, those stolen interviews, and without them I believe my poor Molly would have died. As it was, how she bore up and defied her mother and the bosom of the Church alike, I really do not know. I said as much one day to Jack's wife. Jack's wife looked up at me for a minute, then looked into the fire.

‘It's only fair,’ she remarked, ‘that we women don't have to serve in the regulars, for there are plenty of us in the Noble Army of Martyrs.’

CHAPTER II.

AT last the long and weary months of waiting were over, and Molly was twenty-one. The day following her birthday we were married. It was all very quietly managed. Jack fetched her away during the evening, and gave his mother a piece of his mind in exchange for her. Lord, how happy we were, she and I ! What did it matter to us how Mrs. Fanshawe raved ? How she prophesied evil, and in strictly scriptural language heaped curses upon our heads ! We did not care a rap, we went and got married, and that was the great thing. Septimus Bloggs was away, and, as we went armed with a licence, the curate—no, I mean the priest-in-charge—could not refuse to do his duty, so Stamper married us. It was rather a joke, and Jack's wife said it served the little wretch right. She even asked him to the breakfast, but he did not come ! We didn't care. Sir Hugh sent me a cheque for fifty pounds, his good wishes, and a pretty bracelet engraved ‘Good Luck’ for Molly. We had a fortnight in Paris before us, and we didn't care a rap for anybody, not for anybody.

And Sir Hugh did something more, something I rather wished the dear old fellow had left undone—he went and pleaded for us with my mother-in-law, so that when we came back we found ourselves friends again.

For my part, I would much rather not have been friends, so

would Molly, for Mrs. Fanshawe was one of those meddling, managing, housewifely persons, always with her finger in somebody's pie. Now in Elizabeth Bloggs's pie there was no chance of her having even so much as the tip of her finger—Elizabeth Bloggs was herself over again. She met her with a mouth full of duty and reverence, and a longer string of texts even than Mrs. Fanshawe had at command, she flaunted her husband's authority in her mother's face, and reminded her of her devotion to her blessed saint in heaven, otherwise poor Bob Fanshawe, whose authority had been just about as great as the authority of the Reverend Bloggs up at the Rectory.

Nor, blocked as regarded the pie of her eldest daughter, did Mrs. Fanshaw succeed any better with respect to Jack's. *Mrs. Jack took care of that.* Thereupon she fell back upon us, and we got the benefit, not of her finger but of her whole hand, generally of both of them.

I stood it for nearly a year, and then I put a stop to it. I had tried before, not once nor twice but many times, but somehow the old lady was always too many for me. She would remind Molly tragically of the mother she had been to her, at which poor Molly, who was not at that time very strong, would begin to sob piteously, when Mrs. Fanshawe would further call to her remembrance that she had forgiven her base ingratitude and defiance, and had taken her to her arms again. That always conquered Molly, and Mrs. Fanshawe's grey eyes would glare at me in triumph. I am afraid I often went out and made remarks it would not be polite to repeat. I used to go into the little hall and say them to the hat-stand or the door-mat, but, as things turned out afterwards, I wished hundreds of times I had allowed myself to have the satisfaction of saying them to my mother-in-law herself.

We came to open war, instead of the armed neutrality which had been our attitude since my marriage to Molly, in this way. We were hourly expecting the birth of Ethel, our eldest child, and Molly, having nearly been worried to death during the past four years, was very ill, very ill indeed. Jack and an elderly doctor from Blankhampton were in anxious attendance—my mother-in-law was kneeling by the side of my wife's bed praying in a loud voice and chiefly for me—just, so Jane Bell said, as years before she had been wont to pray in public for poor Bob, now a blessed saint in heaven. As for me, I was hanging about

anywhere, feeling more uncomfortable and miserable than I had ever felt in all my life.

‘Take that woman away !’ I heard the strange doctor say in authoritative tones, when once I paused by the open door of Molly’s room.

‘Come downstairs, mother,’ I heard Jack say imperatively.

My mother-in-law prayed on louder than ever.

‘Mother, do you hear ?’ said Jack.

But no, she prayed on, a loud, wooden, talking-at-people sort of prayer. She prayed with a frankness which was simply appalling. I stepped into the room, I motioned to Jack, and we grabbed her simultaneously, whisking her out of it pretty much after the manner in which children play the game of honey-pots. Once outside the door she tried to turn like a stag at bay ; but we hustled her down to the dining-room, and there Jack expounded his views—they were very clear, but they were not polished, not by any means.

By the skin of her teeth my poor little Molly was pulled through, but I forbade my mother-in-law the house. She threatened to cut Molly off with a shilling. I told her she was very welcome to do it. She raved of Molly’s duty to her mother. I ventured to hint that her first duty was obedience to me, and so we got rid of her.

Five years went by, five happy, happy years, which saw us with four little copies of Molly round our table. During that time Mrs. Fanshawe never once darkened our doors, and Molly saw her but seldom, though if she did chance to come across her or the children she never lost the opportunity of having a fling at her for sending out our children in presentable clothing, or for being becomingly dressed herself.

And then quite suddenly and unexpectedly Mrs. Fanshawe went and died. I cannot say I was sorry. Molly drew down the blinds and ordered a black gown, but did not think it was necessary to weep. Jack said, openly, that his mother had been a mistake of nature—a complete mistake.

So she was buried, and we all went back to her house to hear the will read : it was short and exceedingly simple, for everything was left to Mrs. Septimus Bloggs, with the exception of a certain iron-bound box, which was bequeathed, with its contents, to Molly. At the end came this peroration :—

‘This I leave, and this only, to my daughter Mary, the wife of William Manners, at present agent to Sir Hugh Brande, because

she has openly defied me, and has been a disobedient and ungrateful child ; and because the contents thereof being part of the theatrical wardrobe of an aunt of my late husband's, who disgraced herself and her family by acting on the stage, and met a sinner's death by a stroke of lightning, may prove to her taste in dressing herself and her children. And being fond of sham worth, she may value the paste ornaments in the blue box which will be found therein.'

Jack was never mentioned. And so my mother-in-law aimed her two last venomous shafts from the very grave itself. Molly was bitterly hurt and very indignant. She would have left the poor dead-and-gone actress's belongings behind, but Jack sent them home to us, and we turned them over before consigning the iron-bound chest to the lumber-room. There was a great variety—rich-coloured brocades, fine laces, soft satins, velvets, and silks ; and at the bottom of all a large blue leather case containing a profusion of stage jewellery—a whole suite of paste brilliants, a suite of emeralds, several strings of large pearls, some pearl ornaments, and a variety of odds and ends. Molly looked at them with a sigh. 'Poor thing !' she said ; 'and she was killed by a flash of lightning ! Poor thing ! Ah, well, they didn't look bad, I dare say, on the *stage*,' and then she closed the lid and dropped the case once more among the old and faded silks and satins.

Jane Bell told us that she well remembered the box coming when the then 'old Mrs. Fanshawe' died—that is, Bob's mother. The mistress had told her all about the master's sister who had been killed by lightning many and many a year before, almost on the eve of her marriage with Lord Cumberland. She was Bob's eldest sister, older than him by sixteen years, and the eldest of a large family of which he was the little Benjamin. Jane Bell went on to describe how my mother-in-law had turned the contents of this box over, remarking that Miss Margery Fanshawe must have been a very gay and frivolous person, judging by her taste in dress, then she had picked up two very old and faded newspapers, which were pushed down at one side of the box, and after reading them, threw them back and locked up the box in silence, 'with that turn of her lips, poor thing,' said Jane Bell, 'as told them as knew her, that she was not best pleased.'

Molly took the papers down with her and looked them over. I copy two paragraphs. The *Morning Chronicle*, March 5, 1793 :—

COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

‘A lady made her first appearance last night as Zara in *The Mourning Bride*. The fair candidate for the public favour, after the first apprehension had subsided, displayed powers of a very superior kind. In the touches of tenderness with which the part is occasionally enriched, she affected the heart with the pathos and melody of her tones, and proved that her voice is naturally rich, various, and flexible. Her figure is exquisitely beautiful. Her complexion is fair, and her lovely features are animated by an expression so spirited as to give promise of a talent for comedy, or at least for the softer emotions of the soul, rather than the vehement passions which she had last night to display in the arduous character of Zara. She has so many of the best endowments for the stage that we trust she means to pursue it. We consider her a most valuable acquisition to the theatre. This morning it is reported, however, that a certain nobleman was so enchanted by her beauty and grace that he intends to lay himself and his coronet at her feet.’

August 23, 1793.—‘A terrific thunderstorm passed over the metropolis yesterday afternoon, doing a large amount of damage and resulting in several fatalities, of which the most distressing was the death, by the fall of a tree, of his Lordship the Earl of Cumberland and the beautiful and favourite actress, Miss Margery Fanshawe. The ill-fated pair, who were on the eve of marriage, were walking together in Kensington Gardens when the storm came on. They took shelter under a tree, which, being almost immediately shattered by a flash of lightning, fell, crushing both to death instantaneously. An account of the noble lord will be found in another column. The lady is the eldest daughter of Mr. George Fanshawe, of Little Barton, Blankshire. She appeared at Covent Garden Theatre for the first time during the spring of the present year, when she at once sprang into popularity, and by her beauty and grace attracted much notice, notably that of the noble lord whose untimely end she shared.’

‘Poor thing !’ sighed Molly, laying the newspapers, yellow and torn and musty, aside with reverent fingers. ‘Poor young thing !’

I felt sad and depressed that night, for a few months previously Sir Hugh had sent for me and told me that in consequence of the general depression, owing to bad seasons, reduced rents, and empty farms, he would have to reduce my income from four to three hundred a year, and on that very day he had told me to look out for a new berth, taking my own time.

‘I positively cannot afford but two hundred and fifty,’ he said frankly. I stayed on at two hundred and fifty, because I did not find another berth easy to drop into, and of course, as with Molly’s little settlement we had still four hundred a year, we were comfortable enough. I heard from Jack that he had suggested to Elizabeth Bloggs that she should go shares in her mother’s property with Molly. She answered him with a text, of course, and added that her dear dead mother’s will was law ; upon which

Jack quarrelled with her, and never spoke to her again, except as to Mrs. Bloggs, the rector's wife.

With us life flowed on much the same for more than a year, and then—oh! there came a day—the evil day that old Mrs. Fanshawe had foretold: when I had to go home and tell Molly that the Hall was sold, Sir Hugh almost penniless, and I—out of a situation.

Out of a situation I remained for months and months and months. We got shabby and careworn, both of us. We gave up our house in Little Barton, and took a very small one in Blankhampton, because nobody knew us there. We had no servant, for we found that our 150*l.* a year was barely enough for ourselves. Ourselves now meant not two but seven.

We were very poor and very hopeless, but our hearts never drifted apart—thank God for it. We talked of emigrating, of realising the capital settled upon Molly, and trying a start in a fresh country. And yet, to make such a start with a delicate wife and five children—five children, who would soon be six—I did not dare to do it.

We had been half a year in the tiny house at Blankhampton, when one evening, when Molly was coming down from putting the last of the children to bed, she tore her dress. She uttered an exclamation of dismay.

‘Oh! Willy, I have torn my dress; it caught on the bolt. How vexing! It is the last I have. How shall I be able to get another? Oh! Willy, Willy, what an unlucky bird I have been to you!’ she cried, the tears filling her blue soft eyes.

I caught her to me. ‘Unlucky? I’d rather live under a hedge with you, my darling,’ I told her, ‘than have any other woman, even a queen, for my wife. Never mind your dress; or stay, why can’t you get one of those dresses in the iron-bound chest dyed?’

‘Yes, I might,’ she said doubtfully, smoothing my hand up and down between hers. ‘We might look at them, at all events.’

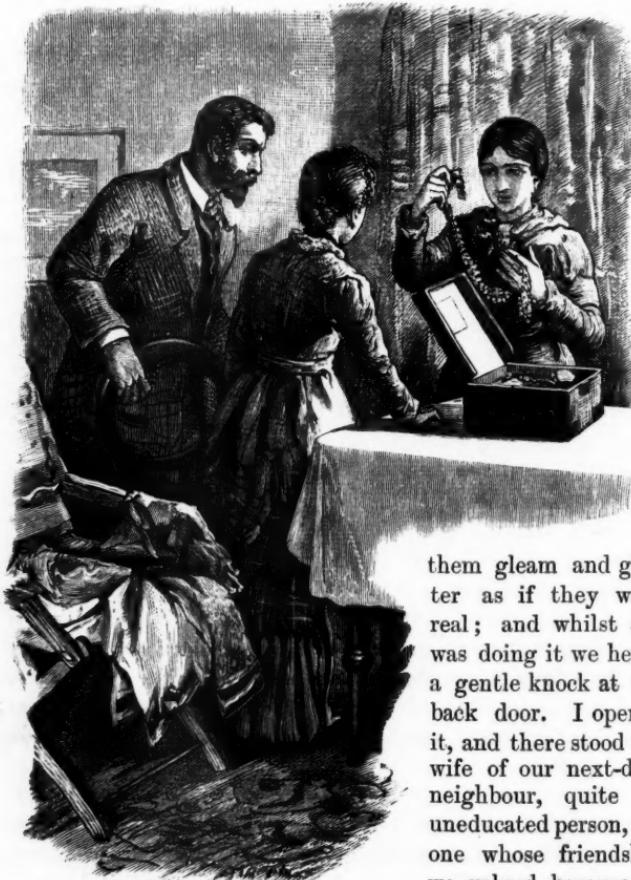
We took a candle and went upstairs, when Molly opened the box for the first time since the night Jack sent it home to us. She soon picked out a couple of gowns which she said were worth dyeing, and then, coming to the blue case, she opened it. The stage jewellery flashed and twinkled in the candle-light.

‘They really look very well,’ said she, thoughtfully. ‘I wonder, Willy, if any one would buy them—any actress, I mean?’

'They might sell. They'll never be any use to us,' I replied.

'I'll take them down and clean them up,' she said cheerfully —a very small ray of hope makes my darling cheerful. 'We might sell them through *The Bazaar*.'

So she took them down and cleaned them carefully, making



them gleam and glitter as if they were real; and whilst she was doing it we heard a gentle knock at the back door. I opened it, and there stood the wife of our next-door neighbour, quite an uneducated person, yet one whose friendship we valued because it

had been given to us in adversity.

'I've brought back the potatoes I borrowed of Mrs. Manners to-day,' she said pleasantly. She often borrowed little things in that way. Then catching sight of Molly she cried, 'Why, Mrs. Manners, whatever have you got there?'

Molly explained, in detail. Mrs. Mason turned the ornaments over carefully.

‘Mason’s a jeweller, you know,’ she remarked presently.

‘Oh, is he? I didn’t know,’ answered Molly.

‘I dare say not. We don’t tell folks; it’s better not, for he often has work to do at home. But he is, and he’s something more; he’s a diamond-setter—the only one in Blankhampton. Them stones is real,’ she added carelessly, yet with the air of a woman who knew the value of words.

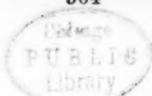
‘What!’ we cried together.

‘Them’s real,’ she repeated; ‘worth thousands. Fine emeralds, too—worth more than the diamonds; but I’ll fetch Mason.’

‘Are you *sure*? ’ cried Molly in an agonised voice.

‘They don’t set paste clear, my dear,’ answered Mrs. Mason kindly, and disappeared.

When Mason came we found she was right. They were worth thousands—just thirty, and most probably had been Lord Cumberland’s last gift to his actress-love. Molly insisted upon sharing them with Jack. Bless her! she still has a firm belief, and will have it to her dying day, that ‘mother was only having a little joke out of us’ when she left her her great-aunt’s stage-effects.



SOME COINCIDENCES OF LITERATURE.

THE most curious perhaps of the 'Curiosities of Literature' is this slip of ignorance D'Israeli himself makes of the precise kind that he is gibbeting in Congreve and others. In exposing the incompetence of the editor of '*Reliquiae Gethinianæ*'—the posthumously published commonplace book of that Lady Grace Gethin whose monument is in the south aisle of Westminster Abbey—he says:—

The *Reliquiae Gethinianæ* might well have delighted their readers; but those who had read Lord Bacon's 'Essays' and other writers, such as Owen Feltham and Osborne, from whom these relics are chiefly extracted, might have wondered that Bacon should have been so little known to the families of the Nortons and the Gethins, to whom her ladyship was allied; to Congreve and the editor; and still more particularly to subsequent compilers, as Ballard, in his 'Memoirs,' and lately the Rev. Mark Noble, in his continuation of Granger, who both give specimens of these relics without a suspicion that they were transcribing literally from Lord Bacon's 'Essays.'

Hereon D'Israeli proceeds to give specimens of these relics without a suspicion that he was himself transcribing literally from Bacon's essays. 'It is one of the best bonds of chastity and obedience in the wife,' he quotes from the '*Reliquiae*', 'if she think her husband wise, which she will never do if she find him jealous. Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age, and old men's nurses.'

And then he adds, 'This degrading sentence is found in some writer whose name I cannot recollect.' But 'the degrading sentence' is found, I need hardly say, in Bacon's essay 'On Marriage and Single Life.' A similar slip is made by Montaigne in his essay 'Of Moderation,' where he quotes, as from 'some obscure and lascivious poet,' a gross and garbled version of a passage from the *Iliad* (xiv. 194). Montaigne, again, is credited by Bacon with a debt due really to Plutarch. 'Montaigne saith prettily when he enquired the reason why the word of the *lie* should be such a disgrace and such an odious charge. Saith he, "If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth is as much as to say that he is brave towards God and a coward towards man." A fine saying, to be found, however, in Plutarch's 'Life of Lysander.' While, perhaps, Montaigne's own fine remark in this essay 'Of

Giving the Lie,' that 'no community, however degraded, could hold together without truth,' might have been in Sir Thomas Browne's mind when he wrote, in 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica,' 'All community is continued by truth, and that of hell cannot consist without it.' But, indeed, Montaigne is a vast literary reservoir, drawn upon by as many channels as it drains—which is to say a good deal. His own innumerable and unacknowledged debts to Cicero, Seneca, Lucretius, Plutarch, Plato, &c. &c. he justifies thus pleasantly: 'All, or nearly all, my borrowings are from authors so famous and so ancient that they seem to me to tell sufficiently themselves who they are, without giving me the trouble. Their reasons, comparisons, and arguments I transplant purposely into my own soil and confound them amongst my own to conceal the author and awe the audacity of those modern insolent censurers of writings of all sorts. I would have them give Plutarch a fillip on my nose, and lash themselves into fury with railing upon Seneca, while under the impression that they are railing at me.' 'I meant it for the man behind you,' cried the fellow in the hustings crowd, who had flung a dead cat into Macaulay's face. 'I wish you had meant it for me, and hit the man behind me,' growled Macaulay with all Montaigne's humorous scorn of such decent and discriminating criticism.

But *sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes*. If Montaigne has stolen and stored honey from every flower, it is only to have it filched from him in masses by others. Bacon even, even Shakespeare, are his debtors often for ideas, and sometimes for the very form of their expression. 'This is the reason,' says Montaigne, in his essay on 'The Folly of Measuring Truth and Error by Our Own Capacity'—'this is the reason that children, the common people, women, and sick folks are most apt to be led by the ears.'

'Anger,' says Bacon in his essay on that passion, 'is certainly a kind of baseness, as it appears well in the weakness of those subjects in whom it reigns—children, women, old folk, sick folk.'

Or compare, again, these two passages from Bacon with the subjoined passage from Montaigne:—

He made a good answer who, when he was shown hung up in the temple the votive tablets of those who had fulfilled their vows after escaping from shipwreck, and was pressed with the question, 'Did he not then recognise the will of the gods?' asked in his turn, 'But where are the pictures of those who have perished notwithstanding their vows?' The same holds true of almost every

superstition—as astrology, dreams, omens, judgments, and the like—wherein men, pleased with such vanities, attend to those events which are fulfilments, but neglect and pass over the instances where they fail (though this is much more frequently the case).—*Novum Organum*, i. 46: Johnson's translation.

It is the root of all superstition that to the nature of the mind of all men it is consonant for the affirmative or active to affect more than the negative or privative; so that a few times hitting or presence countervails oftentimes failing or absence, as was well answered by Diagoras to him that showed him in Neptune's temple the great number of pictures of such as had escaped shipwreck and had paid their vows to Neptune, saying, 'Advise now, you that think it folly to invocate Neptune in tempest.' 'Yea, but,' saith Diagoras, 'where are they painted that are drowned?'—*The Advancement of Learning*, xiv. 9.

I think never the better of these almanack makers for some accidental hits, for nobody marks their false prognostics, because they are infinite and ordinary; but if they hit upon one truth, that carries a mighty report as being rare, incredible, and prodigious. So Diagoras, surnamed the Atheist, answered him in Samothrace who, showing him in the temple the several offerings and stories in pictures of those who had escaped shipwreck, said to him, 'Look, you who think the gods have no care of human things, what do you say to these saved from death by their grace?' 'Why, I say,' he replied, 'that the pictures of the drowned—the greater number by far—are not here.'—*Montaigne's Essays*, i. 11.

Or compare, again, Montaigne on death, with Bacon and with Jeremy Taylor on the same subject. 'Every opinion, however weak, is of force enough to make itself espoused at the expense of life,' says Montaigne. 'It is worth observing,' says Bacon, 'that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters the fear of death.'

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and, as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other. It is groans and convulsions and a discoloured face, and friends weeping, and Blacks and obsequies and the like, that show death terrible.—*Bacon's Essays*, ii.

The cries of mothers, wives, and children; the visits of astonished and afflicted friends; the attendance of pale and blubbering servants; a dark room set round with burning tapers; our beds environed with physicians and divines; in short, nothing but ghostliness and horror round about us, renders death so formidable that a man almost fancies himself dead and buried already. Children are afraid of those even that they know best and love best when disguised in a vizor, and so are we; the vizor must be removed as well from things as persons, which being taken away, we shall find nothing underneath but the very same death that a mean servant or a poor chambermaid died a day or two ago without any manner of apprehension or concern.—*Montaigne*, i. 19.

Take away but the pomps of death, the disguises and solemn bugbears, the tinsel and the actings by candlelight, and proper and fantastic ceremonies, the minstrels and the noisemakers, the women and the weepers, the swoonings and the shriekings, the nurses and the physicians, the dark room and the ministers, the kindred and the watches; and then to die is easy, ready, and quitted from its troublesome circumstances. It is the same harmless thing that a poor shepherd suffered yesterday, or a maid-servant to-day.—*Jeremy Taylor, Holy Dying*, vii. 4.

In these parallel passages the resemblances are too circumstantial and minute to allow us to suppose that Jeremy Taylor and Bacon borrowed direct from Seneca, and not intermediately through Montaigne.

There is still less doubt, as Shakespeare commentators admit, that Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth, which he pictures for the diversion of the wrecked king's sad thoughts in 'The Tempest,' is an almost verbatim transcript from Montaigne—whose essays, in Florio's translation, with Shakespeare's autograph on the fly-leaf, is one of the treasures of the British Museum.

I the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation—all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure.

'It is a nation,' says Montaigne in Florio's translation, speaking of the natives of the newly discovered America—

It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches, or of poverty: no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation, but idle; no respect of kindred but common, no apparel but natural, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corn, or metal.—Montaigne, i. 30.

But, indeed, Shakespeare, though he is supposed to have gibbeted Montaigne's translator, Florio, both as Holofernes and as Don Adriano De Armado in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' owed immeasurably more to Montaigne than this unimportant passage.

Of our other great poet Milton's indebtedness to Vondel it is needless to speak with Mr. Edmundson's book and the reviews thereon so fresh in the reader's recollection. Of course Mr. Edmundson has overshot himself and proved too much; as, for instance, in this discovery (almost as grotesque as Vondel's description of the Metamorphosis itself) of Milton's plagiarism from him of Satan's transformation into a serpent:—

His visage drawn he felt too sharp and spare,
His arms clung to his ribs, his legs entwining
Each other, till, supplanted, down he fell
A monstrous serpent on his belly prone.—*Paradise Lost*, x. 511-14.

‘Which,’ says Mr. Edmundson, ‘will be clearly seen to have its original in Vondel’s lines’ :—

That bright face to cruel snout,
The teeth to fangs sharpened for gnawing steel,
The feet and hands to fourfold claws, the skin
Of pearly fairness to a dusky hide ;
The back, with bristles rough, two dragon wings
Spreads forth. In short, the Archangel, whom but now
All angels honoured, is transfigured quite—
A medley of seven beasts, each horrible.

If such a grotesque metamorphosis was to be described in detail at all, could it conceivably be more differently described? Or is it conceivable that Milton should have been such a kleptomaniac *chiffonier* as to rake up such rubbish?

But what are we to say to this, that Mr. Swinburne has called ‘the most inexplicable coincidence in the whole range of literature,’ between the lines in ‘*Lycidas*,’ written in 1637 :—

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise—
That last infirmity of noble minds ;

and these lines in the tragedy of ‘*Sir John van Olden Barnavelt*,’ written fifteen years earlier (in 1622) :—

Read but o’er the stories
Of men most famed for courage and for counsel,
And you shall find that the desire for glory
(That last infirmity of noble minds)
Was the last frailty wise men e’er put off.

‘May there not possibly,’ asks Mr. Swinburne, ‘be some Italian original, as yet undiscovered, of the famous line, which must have struck every reader of the passage above cited with instant and astonished recognition?’ But surely the original of the famous line is in Tacitus :—

Etiam sapientibus cupido gloriæ novissima exuitur.—*Tacitus*. *Hist.* iv. 6.

In Montaigne, too, you find the same sentiment, more diffusely expressed, buttressed by a quotation from Augustin :—

And of men’s unreasonable humours it seemeth that the best philosophers do more slowly and more unwillingly clear themselves of this [thirst for fame] than of another. It is the most peevish, the most froward, and the most obstinate of all infirmities. ‘*Quia etiam bene proficientes animos tentare non cessat*.’—*Augustin*, *De Civ. Dei*. v. 11.

In Tacitus also is to be found the original of that couplet of

Dryden which Macaulay lashed Lord Mahon for forgetting, or not knowing :—

Forgiveness to the injured doth belong,
But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong,

Or, as George Herbert has it, ‘The offender never pardons.’ ‘*Proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris*,’ somewhere observes Tacitus, who might also perhaps claim priority for the happy and hackneyed phrase of Disraeli’s, ‘conspicuous by their absence.’ In the ‘Annals’ (iii. 76) we read: ‘*Sed præfulgebant Cæsarius atque Brutus, eo ipso quod effigies eorum non visebantur*’

Another verse of Dryden’s, known to all Lord Macaulay’s schoolboys :—

A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay,

is paralleled closely by these passages in Shakespeare and Fuller :—

The incessant care and labour of his mind
Hath wrought the mure that should confine it in
So thin that life looks through and will break out.

Henry IV, ii., Act iv. Sc. iv.

He was one of a lean body and visage, as if his eager soul, biting for anger at the clog of his body, desired to fret a passage through it.—*Fuller’s Life of Duke D’Alva*.

I suppose it is through a mere, though a strange, coincidence that Swift and Schiller infer in the same words the beneficence of death from its universality. ‘It is impossible,’ says Swift, ‘that anything so natural, so necessary, so universal as death should ever have been designed by Providence as an evil to mankind.’ ‘Death cannot be an evil, for it is universal,’ says Schiller. Compare this fine saying with Zeno’s quibbling and puerile syllogism: ‘No evil is honourable; but death is honourable: therefore death is not an evil.’ Judged by the aphorism that ‘words are the counters of wise men but the money of fools,’ these Grecian sages, who blow such soap bubbles, would cut but a poor figure.

Talking of the use and abuse of words, the saying attributed to Voltaire and to Talleyrand, that ‘words were given us to conceal our thoughts,’ goes farther back than Goldsmith, to whom it has been traced. ‘The true use of speech,’ says Jack Spindle in Goldsmith’s ‘*Citizen of the World*,’ ‘is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.’ But Young before him had written:—

Where Nature’s end of language is declined,
And men talk only to conceal their mind.

And, before Young, South had preached, in one of his wittiest sermons :—

In short, this seems to be the true inward judgment of all our politic sages, that speech was given to the ordinary sort of men whereby to communicate their mind, but to wise men whereby to conceal it.

Young, again, as well as Pope, has been anticipated by more than one in his definition of Nature as the art of God :—

The course of Nature is the art of God.

‘In brief,’ says Sir Thomas Browne in his ‘Religio Medici,’ ‘all things are artificial, for Nature is the Art of God’—words which Hobbes has adopted unaltered in the first line of his introduction to ‘Leviathan.’ But, indeed, the definition is as old as Plato, who says: ‘Those things which are said to be done by Nature are indeed done by Divine Art.’

In depreciating a distinction of another kind between Art and Nature, Burns has hit upon a happy illustration without a suspicion, probably, of its having done duty more than once before in the same service. His democratic sentiment—

The rank is but the guinea stamp ;
The man’s the gowd for a’ that—

is to be found in the first scene of the first act of Wycherley’s ‘Plain Dealer’ :—

I weigh the man, not his title ; ‘tis not the King’s stamp can make the metal better.

From Wycherley Sterne probably stole it ; for, when stealing is in question, the presumption is always against Sterne, so bad is his ‘record.’ ‘Honours, like impressions upon coin, may give an ideal and local value to a bit of base metal ; but gold and silver will pass all the world over without any other recommendation than their own weight,’ he says in ‘Tristram Shandy.’

Usually it is the last man with the least claim who is credited with originating some wise or witty saying ; the image and superscription of the current coin are those of the last king who has re-minted it. Rochefoucauld’s Lucretian cynicism, ‘*Dans l’adversité de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons toujours quelque chose qui ne nous déplaît pas*,’ and his neat but inaccurate definition of hypocrisy as *un hommage que le vice rend à la vertu*, are both to be found within a paragraph of each other in Montaigne’s essay ‘Of Profit and Honesty.’ And in Fontenelle’s ‘Dialogues of

the Dead' (Seneca and Marot) occurs Napoleon's aphorism, ' *Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas* ;' and before Napoleon, Tom Paine, in a note at the close of the second part of his 'Age of Reason,' had said the same thing less epigrammatically:—

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

Again, Goldsmith's exquisitely expressed

And as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return, and die at home at last,

has replaced in quotation Waller's

I would be glad to die, like the stag, where I was roused,
and Dryden's

The hare in pastures or in plains is found :
Emblem of human life, who runs the round,
And, after all his wandering ways are done,
His circle fills, and ends where he begun,
Just as the setting meets the rising sun.

On the other hand, Dryden's

For those, whom God to ruin has designed,
He fits for fate and first destroys the mind,

has not supplanted our old friend *Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*, though this is but a Latin translation in an edition of Euripides of the line

Ο θεὸς θέλει ἀπολέσαι πρῶτον ἀποφρένει.

But the happiest of all plagiarisms perhaps is Ben Jonson's song 'To Celia,' which, as Mr. Symonds and others have shown, has been pieced together exquisitely out of the 'Love Letters' of Philostratus:—

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.

Ἐμοὶ δὲ μόνοις πρόπινε τοῖς ὄμμασιν εἰ δὲ βούλει, τὸν μὲν οἶνον μὴ παραπόλλει, μόνον δὲ ἐμβαλούσα ὑδατος καὶ τοῖς χείλεσι προσφέρουσα πλήρους φιλημάτων τὸ ἔκπαμα.—Kayser, p. 355.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee,
As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be.

Πέπομφα σοι στέφανον ρόδων, οὐ σὲ τιμῶν, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν γάρ, ἀλλ' αὐτοῖς τε χαρι-
ζόμενος τοῖς ρόδοις ίνα μὴ μαρανθῆ.—Kayser, p. 343.

But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sentst it back to me;
Since when it grows and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

Εἰ δὲ βούλει τι φίλῳ χαρίζεσθαι τὰ λέιψανα αὐτῶν ἀντίκεμφον· μηκέτι πνέοντα
ρόδων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ σοῦ.—Kayser, p. 358.

If Jonson has picked the roses out of Philostratus's garden, he has made the immortal wreath he has woven of them breathe only of himself.

To come down to more obvious and audacious thefts, where the property stolen is not, like plate, put into the melting-pot and recast, but, like a watch, is pocketed as it is. Here is a very famous watch that has been so pocketed, and has only just stopped after ticking from ten thousand pulpits for one hundred years. Paley's 'watch' was indisputably stolen from Nieuwentyt, the Dutch philosopher, as translated by Chamberlayne, as the following parallel passages show:—

Over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work, but in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not have been seen without opening the case.—*Paley's Evidences*.

Over the hand there is placed a clear glass in the place of which, if there were any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not have been seen without opening the case.—*Chamberlayne's Translation of Nieuwentyt*.

Of such literal and unquestionable plagiarisms the most extraordinary—when the slight temptation to the theft is weighed against its barefaced nature and its wide extent—is that which De Quincey has traced home to Coleridge. I do not think there is very much in his discoveries—1st, that the expression 'insuppor-tably advancing' has been borrowed by Coleridge from 'Samson Agonistes.' 2nd, that the 'Hymn to Chamouni' is an expansion of a short poem upon the same subject by the German poetess, Frederica Brun. 3rd, that the idea of 'The Ancient Mariner' was derived from Shelvoke's reference, in his 'Voyage Round the World,' to his lieutenant's morbid fancy that the long spell of foul weather they had encountered was due to an albatross which had persistently pursued the ship till it was at last shot by the monomaniac, without, however, the shot taking the desired effect upon the weather. But what is to be said of this wholesale, cynical, and senseless robbery?

In the 'Biographia Literaria' occurs a dissertation upon the reciprocal relations of the *Esse* and the *Cogitare*, that is, of the *objective* and the *subjective*, and an attempt is made, by inverting the postulates from which the argument starts, to show how each might arise as a product; by an intelligible genesis, from the other. . . . This essay of Coleridge's is prefaced by a few words, in which, aware of his coincidence with Schelling, he declares his willingness to acknowledge himself indebted to so great a man, in any case where truth would allow him to do so; but, in this particular case, insisting on the impossibility that he could have borrowed arguments which he had first seen some years after he had thought out the whole hypothesis *proprio marte*. After this, what was my astonishment to find that the entire essay, from the first word to the last, is a *verbatim* translation from Schelling, with no attempt in a single instance to appropriate the paper, by developing the arguments or by diversifying the illustrations? . . . Had, then, Coleridge any need to borrow from Schelling? Did he borrow *in forma pauperis*? Not at all; there lay the wonder. He spun daily, and at all hours, for mere amusement of his own activities, and from the loom of his own magical brain, theories more gorgeous by far, and supported by a pomp and luxury of images such as Schelling—no, nor any German that ever breathed, not Jean Paul—could have emulated in his dreams.—*De Quincey's Works*, vol. ii., Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Apropos of Coleridge, perhaps a parallelism between his description of atheism and that of Tennyson in one of his latest poems, 'Despair,' is worth notice:—

Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see, of the popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the owls are whooping at noon,
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill, and crows to the sun and moon.

—Tennyson.

The owl Atheism,
Sailing on obscene wings across the noon,
Drops his blue-fringed lids and shuts them close,
And, hooting at the glorious sun in heaven,
Cries out, 'Where is it?'—Coleridge.

I cannot conclude this rather bald and desultory inventory of stolen goods more appropriately than by tracing back Prudhon's justification of all robbery, '*La propriété, c'est le vol*,' to a no less sacred source than that of St. Ambrose, who thus preaches the same principle in similar language, '*Superfluum quod tenes tu furaris.*'

IN CASTLE DANGEROUS.

‘WHAT we suffer from most,’ said the Spectre, when I had partly recovered from my fright, ‘is a kind of *aphasia*.’

The Spectre was sitting on the armchair beside my bed in the haunted room of Castle Dangerous.

‘I don’t know,’ said I, as distinctly as the chattering of my teeth would permit, ‘that I quite follow you. Would you mind —excuse me—handing me that flask which lies on the table near you. . . . Thanks.’

The Spectre, without stirring, so arranged the *a priori* sensuous schemata of time and space * that the silver flask, which had been well out of my reach, was in my hand. I poured half the contents into the cup and offered it to him.

‘No spirits,’ he said curtly.

I swallowed eagerly the heady liquor, and felt a little more like myself.

‘You were complaining,’ I remarked, ‘of something like *aphasia*?’

‘I was,’ he replied. ‘You know what *aphasia* is in the human subject? A paralysis of certain nervous centres, which prevents the patient, though perfectly sane, from getting at the words which he intends to use, and forces others upon him. He may wish to observe that it is a fine morning, and may discover that his idea has taken the form of an observation about the Roman Calendar under the Emperor Justinian. That is *aphasia*, and we suffer from what, I presume, is a spiritual modification of that disorder.’

‘Yet to-night,’ I responded, ‘you are speaking like a printed book.’

‘To-night,’ said the Spectre, acknowledging the compliment with a bow, ‘the conditions are peculiarly favourable.’

‘Not to *me*,’ I thought, with a sigh.

‘And I am able to manifest myself with unusual clearness.’

‘Then you are not always in such form as I am privileged to find you in?’ I inquired.

‘By no means,’ replied the Spectre. ‘Sometimes I cannot appear worth a cent. Often I am invisible to the naked eye, and

* This article was originally written for ‘Mind,’ but the author changed his. The reference is to Kant’s Philosophy.

even quite indiscernible by any of the senses. Sometimes I can only rap on the table, or send a cold wind over a visitor's face, or at most pull off his bedclothes (like the spirit which appeared to Caligula, and is mentioned by Suetonius) and utter hollow groans.'

'That's exactly what you *did*,' I said, 'when you wakened me. I thought I should have died.'

'I can't say how distressed I am,' answered the Spectre. 'It is just an instance of what I was trying to explain. We don't know how we are going to manifest ourselves.'

'Don't apologise,' I replied, 'for a constitutional peculiarity. To what do you attribute your success to-night ?'

'Partly to your extremely receptive condition, partly to the whisky you took in the smoking-room, but chiefly to the magnetic environment.'

'Then you do not suffer at all from *aphasia* just now ?'

'Not a touch of it at this moment, thank you ; but, as a rule, we all *do* suffer horribly. This accounts for everything that you embodied spirits find remarkable and enigmatic in our conduct. We *mean* something, straight enough ; but our failure is in expression. Just think how often you go wrong yourselves, though *your* spirits have a brain to play on, like the musician with a piano. Now *we* have to do as well as we can without any such mechanical advantage as a brain of cellular tissue'—here he suddenly took the form of a white lady with a black sack over her head, and disappeared in the wainscot.

'Excuse me,' he said a moment afterwards, quite in his ordinary voice, 'I had a touch of it, I fancy. I lost the thread of my argument, and am dimly conscious of having expressed myself in some unusual and more or less incoherent fashion. I hope it was nothing at all vulgar or distressing ?'

'Nothing out of the way in haunted houses, I assure you,' I replied, 'merely a white lady with a black sack over her head.'

'Oh, *that* was it,' he answered with a sigh ; 'I often am afflicted in that way. Don't mind me if I turn into a luminous boy, or a very old man in chains, or a lady in a green gown and high-heeled shoes, or a headless horseman, or a Mauth hound, or anything of that sort. They are all quite imperfect expressions of our nature,—symptoms, in short, of the malady I mentioned.'

'Then the appalling manifestations to which you allude are not the apparitions of the essential ghost ? It is not in those forms that he appears among his friends ?'

‘Certainly not,’ said the Spectre, ‘and it would be very promotive of good feeling between men and disembodied spirits if this were more generally known. I myself—’

Here he was interrupted by an attack of spirit rappings. A brisk series of sharp faint taps, of a kind I never heard before, resounded from all the furniture of the room.* While the disturbance continued, the Spectre drummed nervously with his fingers on his knee. The sounds ended as suddenly as they had begun, and he expressed his regrets. ‘It is a thing I am subject to,’ he remarked; ‘nervous, I believe, but, to persons unaccustomed to it, alarming.’

‘It *is* rather alarming,’ I admitted.

‘A mere stammer,’ he went on; ‘but you are now able to judge, from the events of to-night, how extremely hard it is for us, with the best intentions to communicate coherently with the embodied world. Why, there is the Puddifant ghost—in Lord Puddifant’s family, you know: *he* has been trying for generations to inform his descendants that the drainage of the Castle is execrable. Yet he can never come nearer what he means than taking the form of a shadowy hearse-and-four and driving round and round Castle Puddifant at midnight. And old Lady Wadham’s ghost, what a sufferer that woman is! She merely desires to remark that the family diamonds, lost many years ago, were never really taken abroad by the valet and sold. He only had time to conceal them in a secret drawer behind the dining-room chimneypiece. Now she can get no nearer expressing herself than producing a spirited imitation of the music of the bagpipes, which wails up and down the house, and frightens the present Sir Robert Wadham and his people nearly out of such wits as a county family may possess. And that’s the way with almost all of us: there is literally no connection (as a rule) between our expressions and the things we intend to express. You know how the Psychical Society make quite a study of Rappings, and try to interpret them by the alphabet? Well, these, as I told you, are merely a nervous symptom, annoying, no doubt, but not dangerous. The only spectres, almost, that manage to hint what they really mean are Banshees.’

‘They intend to herald an approaching death?’ I asked.

‘They do, and abominably bad taste I call it, unless a man has neglected to insure his life, and *then* I doubt if a person of honour

* A similar phenomenon is mentioned in Mr. Howell’s learned treatise ‘An Undiscovered Country.’

could make use of information from—from that quarter. Banshees are chiefly the spectres of attached and anxious old family nurses, women of the lower orders, and completely destitute of tact. I call a Banshee rather a curse than a boon and a blessing to men. Like most old family servants, they are apt to be presuming.'

It occurred to me that the complacent Spectre himself was not an unmixed delight to the inhabitants of Castle Dangerous, or at least to their guests, for they never lay in the Green Chamber themselves.

'Can nothing be done,' I asked sympathetically, 'to alleviate the disorders which you say are so common and distressing?'

'The old system of spiritual physic,' replied the Spectre, 'is obsolete, and the holy-water cure, in particular, has almost ceased to number any advocates, except the Rev. Dr. F. G. Lee, whose books,' said this candid apparition, 'appear to me to indicate superstitious credulity. No, I don't know that any new discoveries have been made in this branch of therapeutics. In the last generation they tried to bolt me with a bishop: like putting a ferret into a rabbit-warren, you know. Nothing came of *that*, and lately the Psychical Society attempted to ascertain my weight by an ingenious mechanism. But they prescribed nothing, and made me feel so nervous that I was rapping at large, and knocking furniture about for months. The fact is that nobody understands the complaint, nor can detect the cause that makes the ghost of a man who was perfectly rational in life behave like an uneducated buffoon afterwards. The real reason, as I have tried to explain to you, is a solution of continuity between subjective thought and will on the side of the spectre, and objective expression of them—confound it—'

Here the sound of heavy feet was heard promenading the room, and balls of incandescent light floated about irresolutely, accompanied by the appearance of a bearded man in armour. The door (which I had locked and bolted before going to bed) kept opening and shutting rapidly, so as to cause a draught, and my dog fled under the bed with a long low howl.

'I do hope,' remarked the Spectre presently, 'that these interruptions (only fresh illustrations of our malady) have not frightened your dog into a fit. I have known very valuable and attached dogs expire of mere unreasoning terror on similar unfortunate occasions.'

‘I’m sure I don’t wonder at it,’ I replied; ‘but I believe Bingo is still alive; in fact, I hear him scratching himself.’

‘Would you like to examine him?’ asked the Spectre.

‘Oh, thanks, I am sure he is all right,’ I answered (for nothing in the world would have induced me to get out of bed while he was in the room). ‘Do you object to a cigarette?’

‘Not at all, not at all; but Lady Dangerous, I assure you, is a very old-fashioned châtelaine. However, if *you* choose to risk it——’

I found my cigarette case in my hand, opened it, and selected one of its contents, which I placed between my lips. As I was looking round for a match-box, the Spectre courteously put his forefinger to the end of the cigarette, which lighted at once.

‘Perhaps you wonder,’ he remarked, ‘why I remain at Castle Dangerous, the very one of all my places which I never could bear while I was alive—as you call it?’

‘I had a delicacy about asking,’ I answered.

‘Well,’ he continued, ‘I am the Family Genius.’

‘I might have guessed *that*,’ I said.

He bowed and went on. ‘It is hereditary in our house, and I hold the position of Genius till I am relieved. For example, when the family want to dig up the buried treasure under the old bridge, I thunder and lighten and cause such a storm that they desist.’

‘Why on earth do you do *that*? ’ I asked. ‘It seems hardly worth while to have a Genius at all.’

‘In the interests of the family morality. The money would soon go on the turf, and on dice, drink, &c., if they excavated it; and then I work the Curse, and bring off the Prophecies, and so forth.’

‘What prophecies?’

‘Oh, the rigmarole the old family seer came out with before they burned him for an unpalatable prediction at the time of the ’15. He was very much vexed about it, of course, and he just prophesied any nonsense of a disagreeable nature that came into his head. You know what these Crofter fellows are—ungrateful, vindictive rascals. He had been in receipt of outdoor relief for years. Well, he prophesied stuff like this: “When the owl and the eagle meet on the same blasted rowan tree, then a lassie in a white hood from the east shall make the burn of Cross-cleugh run full red,” and drivel of that insane kind. Well, you can’t think what trouble that particular prophecy gave me. It

had to be fulfilled, of course, for the family credit, and I brought it off as near as, I flatter myself, it could be done.'

'Lady Dangerous was telling me about it last night,' I said, with a shudder. 'It was a horrible affair.'

'Yes, no doubt, no doubt; a cruel business! But how I am to manage some of them I'm sure *I* don't know. There's one of them in rhyme. Let me see, how does it go?

When Mackenzie lies in the perilous ha',
 The wild Red Cock on the roof shall craw,
 And the lady shall flee ere the day shall daw,
 And the laird shall girn in the deed man's thraw.

'The "crowing of the wild Red Cock" means that the Castle shall be burned down, of course (I'm beginning to know his style by this time), and the lady is to elope, and the laird—that's Lord Dangerous—is to expire in the "deed man's thraw": that is the name the old people give the Secret Room. And all this is to happen when a Mackenzie, a member of a clan with which we are at feud, sleeps in the Haunted Chamber—where we are just now. By the way, what is *your* name?'

I don't know what made me reply 'Allan Mackenzie.' It was true, but it was not politic.

'By Jove!' said the Spectre, eagerly. 'Here's a chance! I don't suppose a Mackenzie has slept here for those hundred years. And now, how is it to be done? Setting fire to the Castle is simple'—here I remembered how he had lighted my cigarette—'but who on earth is to elope with Lady Dangerous? She's fifty if she's a day, and evangelical *à tout casser*! Oh no; the thing is out of the question. It really must be put off to another generation or two. There is no hurry.'

I felt a good deal relieved. He was clearly a being of extraordinary powers, and might, for anything I knew, have made me run away with Lady Dangerous. And then, when the pangs of remorse began to tell on her ladyship, never a very lively woman at the best of times— However, the Spectre seemed to have thought better of it.

'Don't you think it is rather hard on a family,' I asked, 'to have a Family Genius, and Prophecies, and a Curse, and—'

'And everything handsome about them,' he interrupted me by exclaiming; 'and you call yourself a Mackenzie of Megasky! What has become of family pride? Why, you yourselves have Gruagach of the Red Hand in the hall, and he, I can tell you, is

a very different sort of spectre from *me*. Pre-Christian, you know—one of the oldest ghosts in Ross-shire. But as to “hard on a family,” why, *noblesse oblige*’.

‘Considering that you are the Family Genius, you don’t seem to have brought them much luck,’ I put in, for the house of Dangerous is neither rich in gold nor very well preserved in reputation.

‘Yes, but just think what they would have been *without* a Family Genius, if they are *what* they are *with one*! Besides, the Prophecies are really responsible,’ he added, with the air of one who says ‘I have a partner—Mr. Jorkins.’

‘Do you mind telling me one thing?’ I asked eagerly. ‘What is the mystery of the Secret Chamber—I mean the room whither the heir is taken when he comes of age, and he never smiles again, nor touches a card except at baccarat?’

‘Never smiles *again*!’ said the Spectre. ‘Doesn’t he? Are you quite certain that he ever smiled *before*? ’

This was a new way of looking at the question, and rather disconcerted me.

‘I did not know the Master of Dangerous before he came of age,’ said I, ‘but I have been here for a week, and watched him and Lord Dangerous, and I never observed a smile wander over their lips. And yet little Tompkins’ (he was the chief social buffoon of the hour) ‘has been in great force, and I may say that I myself have occasionally provoked a grin from the good-natured.’

‘That’s just it,’ said the Spectre. ‘The Dangerouses have no sense of humour, never had. I am entirely destitute of it myself. Even in Scotland, even *here*, this family failing has been remarked—been the subject, I may say, of unfavourable comment. The Dangerous of the period lost his head because he did not see the point of a conundrum of Macbeth’s. We felt, some time in the fifteenth century, that this peculiarity needed to be honourably accounted for, and the family developed that story of the Secret Chamber, and the Horror in the house. There is nothing in the chamber whatever,—neither a family idiot aged three hundred years, nor a skeleton, nor the Devil, nor a wizard, nor missing title-deeds. The affair is a mere formality to account creditably for the fact that we never see anything to laugh at, never see the joke. Some people can’t see ghosts, you know’ (lucky people! thought I), ‘and some can’t see jokes.’

‘This is very disappointing,’ I said.

‘I can’t help it,’ said the Spectre; ‘the truth often is. Did you ever hear the explanation of the haunted house in Berkeley Square?’

‘Yes,’ said I. ‘The bell was heard to ring thrice with terrific vehemence, and on rushing to the fatal scene they found him beautiful in death.’

‘Fudge!’ replied the Spectre. ‘The lease and furniture were left to an old lady, who was not to underlet the house nor sell the things. She had a house of her own in Albemarle Street which she preferred, and so the house in Berkeley Square was never let till the lease expired. That’s the whole affair. The house was empty, and political economists could conceive no reason for the waste of rent except that it was haunted. The rest was all Jimmy—’

‘Oh, Jimmy was in it, was he?’ I interrupted.

‘I mean, all Miss Broughton’s imagination, in “Tales for Christmas Eve.”

He had evidently got on his hobby, and was beginning to be rather tedious. The contempt which a genuine old family ghost has for mere *parvenus* and impostors is not to be expressed in words apparently, for Mauth hounds, of prodigious size and blackness, with white birds, and other disastrous omens, now began to display themselves profusely in the Haunted Chamber. Accustomed as I had become to regard all these appearances as mere automatic symptoms, I confess that I heard with pleasure the crow of a distant cock.

‘You have enabled me to pass a most instructive evening, most agreeable, too, I am sure,’ I remarked to the Spectre, ‘but you will pardon me for observing that the First Cock has gone. Don’t let me make you too late for any appointment you may have about this time—anywhere.’

‘Oh, you still believe in that old superstition about cock-crow, do you?’ he sneered. ‘I thought you had been too well educated. “It faded on the crowing of the cock,” did it, indeed, and that in Denmark too,—almost within the Arctic Circle! Why, in those high latitudes, and in summer, a ghost would not have an hour to himself on these principles. Don’t you remember the cock Lord Dufferin took north with him, which crowed at sunrise, and ended by crowing without intermission and going mad, when the sun did not set at all? You must observe that any rule of that

sort about cock-crow would lead to shocking irregularities, and to an early-closing movement for spectres in summer, which would be ruinous to business—simply ruinous—and, in these days of competition, intolerable.'

This was awful, for I could see no way of getting rid of him. He might stay to breakfast, or anything.

'By the way,' he asked, 'who does the Cock at the Lyceum just now? It is a small but very exacting part—"Act I. scene 1. Cock crows."

'I believe Mr. Irving has engaged a real fowl, to crow at the right moment behind the scenes,' I said. 'He is always very particular about these details. Quite right too. "The Cock, by kind permission of the Aylesbury Dairy Company," is on the bills.'

I knew nothing about it, but if this detestable Spectre was going to launch out about art and the drama there would be no sleep for me.

'Then the glow-worm,' he said—"have they a real glow-worm, for the Ghost's "business" (Act I. scene 5) when he says?—

Fare thee well at once,
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his ineffectual fire.

Did it ever strike you how inconsistent that is? Clearly the ghost appeared in winter; don't you remember how they keep complaining of the weather?

For this relief much thanks; 'tis bitter cold,
and
The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

and then they go on about the glow-worms in the neighbourhood! Most incongruous. How does Furnival take it? An interpolation by Middleton?'

I don't like to be rude, but I admit that I hate being bothered about Shakspeare, and I yawned.

'Good-night,' he said snappishly, and was gone.

Presently I heard him again, just as I was dropping into a doze.

'You won't think, in the morning, that this was all a dream, will you? Can I do anything to impress it on your memory? Suppose I shrivel your left wrist with a touch of my hand? Or shall I leave "a sable score of fingers four" burned on the table? Something of that sort is usually done.'

‘Oh, pray don’t take the trouble,’ I said. ‘I’m sure Lady Dangerous would not like to have the table injured, and she might not altogether believe my explanation. As for myself, I’ll be content with your word for it that you were really here. Can I bury your bones for you, or anything? Very well, as you *must* be off, good-night!’

‘No, thanks,’ he replied. ‘By the way, I’ve had an idea about my apparitions in disguise. Perhaps it is my “Unconscious Self” that does them. You have read about the “Unconscious Self” in the “Spectator”?’

Then he really went.

A nun, in grey, who moaned and wrung her hands, remained in the room for a short time, but was obviously quite automatic. I slept till the hot water was brought in the morning.



SOME FAROE NOTES.

THOUGH not more than two hundred miles from the most northerly point of the Shetlands, the Faroe Isles are for purposes of business and communication as distant from Great Britain as the Cape of Good Hope or Australia. On an average there is a mail steamer from Copenhagen to Thorshavn (the capital of the Faroes) once a month. This steamer always calls at Leith on its way, and thus constitutes the mail and passenger connecting link with the isles. But apart from it there is no way of reaching Faroe except by yacht, or a trading schooner from Liverpool, the Orkneys, or Bergen in Norway. No wonder, therefore, that in these bleak but curiously interesting northern islands a tourist is still held in regard less for the money in his pocket than for the novelty of his person, and the stock of strange ideas and personal effects which may accompany him. In some years not a single visitor of any nationality except the Danish comes into the island. Ordinarily, however, one, two, or three Englishmen arrive, with their guns and fishing rods, and settle down much as they would settle on the island of Juan Fernandez, content with the gifts of nature and a total abstention from the luxuries and conveniences of civilisation. For weeks they are not bored with letters or English newspapers; for weeks they are among a people as primitive as any in Europe, who speak a language peculiar to themselves, who catch and eat whales when they can, and among whom, from time immemorial, serious crime (such as murder and adultery) has had no place. And, be the weather ever so mild and unsettled, the Faroe fogs ever so persistent, it will be odd if these two or three Englishmen leave the island eventually without a pang of regret. They may have caught few trout worth the catching, shot nothing but a score of snipe and oyster-catchers (with, maybe, one hare, out of season, for which they have had to pay a fine of six shillings), and never set foot upon one of Faroe's little mountains, ribbed with snow even in August; but they will think with regret of the rare tranquillity of the life, its healthiness, and the genial kindnesses of the simple but more than hospitable inhabitants of the isles.

The Faroes are made up of some twenty-three islands and

islets, of which only seventeen are inhabited. From extreme north to south they measure about sixty miles, with a breadth of about forty. It is so rarely that an Englishman has any idea of the dimensions of the different islands that I may, perhaps, be forgiven a short category, affording this information.

The Danish administration divides the Faroes into six syssels or provinces, over each of which is a sysselmand or provincial judge and revenue officer. The northern syssel embraces the most northerly of the isles, Fugloe, two miles long by two broad; Svinoe, 4×3 ; Widbroe, 8×3 ; Bordoe, 11×5 ; Kunoe, $7 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$; Kalsoe, $10 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$; Osteroe, the second largest of the isles, is about 19×10 , and constitutes a syssel by itself. The Stromoe syssel includes Stromoe as chief island, 25×7 ; Naalsoe, a picturesque rock which protects Thorshavn on the east, 5 miles by 1; Hestoe, $3 \times \frac{2}{3}$; and Kolter, $2 \times \frac{2}{3}$. Waagoe, 12 miles by $6\frac{1}{2}$, gives its name to another syssel, which includes also Myggences, the westernmost isle, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2$; and the rocky islets of Tindholm and Gaasholm. Sandoe, south of Stromoe, gives the name to the fifth syssel. Sandoe is 12×4 ; with it are included the islands of Skuoë, $3 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$; and Store Dimon (the Great Diamond), $2 \times \frac{1}{2}$. Lastly is the Suderoe syssel, including Suderoe, the southernmost island, 17×5 ; and Lille Dimon (the Little Diamond), a circular islet about two-thirds of a mile in diameter. To this may be added the celebrated Monk Rock, three miles south of Suderoe, which, until a few months ago, lifted its eighty feet of basalt above the sea level. Now, however, the danger of its isolated breakers is increased by the downfall of its pinnacle; and its site is mainly discoverable by the disturbed state of the sea in its vicinity.

Faroe, like the rest of the world, has had its human vicissitudes. The earliest known inhabitants of the isles were certain hermits who migrated thither from Scotland; and in truth they could not have chosen a spot more likely to favour their taste for retirement. But in course of time, the Vikings, who ravaged all the northern seas, touched at Faroe, attracted thither, it is said, by the multitudes of wild sheep about its rocks; and then the hermits withdrew in search of less troubled regions. For a while all history of the isles subsequently is mythological. But, with the advent of Harold Harfager to the throne of Norway, it becomes again veracious. The severity of this king drove many of his subjects out of his kingdom, and some of these by accident

or design reached the Faroes. They initiated the heroic epoch in the history of the isles; when such famous old warriors as Thrond, Sigmund, Sigmund's sons, Brexer and Beiner, and the other Goteskoegger were living and fighting men. And it was to Thrond and his contemporaries that Faroe was indebted for the maintenance and establishment of law and order in the isles. But in 1024 certain of the headmen made overtures to the then ruler of Norway, Olaf the Holy; and, in spite of all Thrond's endeavours, a few years later Faroe was definitely annexed to Scandinavia. It was not, however, until 1815 that, by the treaty of Kiel, the islands passed to the kingdom of Denmark, of which they now form a part, and a valuable link between the northern country and Iceland and Greenland, its more northern dependencies. The name Faroe is generally supposed to derive from the Scandinavian 'faar,' a sheep—so-called from the number of wild sheep originally on the isles. But others hold the name to be indicative of the Far Isles: the Ultima Thule of a certain epoch; from *fjern* or *fjern*, far, or remote.

As for the population of the Faroes, it may be considered large in proportion to the scanty resources of the isles. In 1850 it was 9,150; in 1860, 8,922; in 1874, 10,500; and in 1884, 11,220, or exactly 22 per square mile. Thorshavn, the capital, with five or six hundred inhabitants in 1874, has now about a thousand, and its numbers continue to increase rapidly. Here may be found the representatives of most branches of simple commerce; and for the advantage of the richer Faroese and strangers, the woodturner of the place is willing to turn his back on his lathe, and play the part of hairdresser. But elsewhere than in Thorshavn, the Faroese are robustly self-dependent. For almost everything of domestic use or consumption, save foreign produce, they rely upon themselves, their neighbours, their flocks and cattle, and the ever-generous sea close at hand.

All the Faroes are extremely rocky. So much so that every available or even possible landing-place is the nucleus of a little town; and in the interior there is hardly a hundred yards of level ground anywhere. Not a tree helps to soften the rigour of a Faroe spring or winter. White boulders strew the land, which, where it is not laboriously brought into a rude state of cultivation, is covered with purple heather, moss, shingle, strata of porphyry or basalt, and bogs of varying depth. A peculiar kind of firm reddish grass on the mountain sides gives good feeding to the

Faroe sheep and horses; and it is equally hardy in winter and summer. The potatoes, rye, and barley which are the chief artificial products of the isles suffer the good and bad fortune which is the speculative lot of such produce in the Northern Hebrides and elsewhere.

I have said that the Faroes are rocky. In truth their coastline in parts may be termed stupendous. Mylning Head, for instance, the extreme northern cape of Stromoe, consists of a number of remarkable forbjerge, or headlands, falling two thousand feet sheer into the sea; some even overhanging, so that a stone dropped from the summit may be watched until it is too small to be seen. Elsewhere are walls or fissures a thousand and twelve hundred feet high, at one time split from the mainland; and the sea breaks and surges into these awful channels with weird and stunning reverberations. Yet a Faroe fowler will descend here fearlessly, and, with his net, trap hundreds of puffins in a day. Perhaps the most eccentric rock-conformation in all the isles is to be found at the southern extremity of Kunoe. Here are mountains of all conceivable shapes, their sides sunk in the sea: seen under a clear sky, when their grotesque outlines are shown forth minutely, they will not soon be forgotten. This island Kunoe, and its neighbour Kalsoe, are in reality nothing but two parallel ridges of mountain summits upheaved above the sea-level, fifteen hundred to two thousand feet in height, and sinking abruptly everywhere except in two or three places. These exceptional perches give living-space and sustenance to their few inhabitants. In all its eleven or twelve square miles of area, Kunoe, for instance, has in cultivation only about seventy marks (a mark is twelve hundred and ninety-six square yards), and Kalsoe, with fifteen square miles, under a hundred marks. The landing at Mygledahl, Kalsoe's chief colony, has to be accomplished as best it may. The village huddles on a terrace of rock many feet above the sea-level, and the boats are pulled up from the surf and let down thereinto mechanically.

It may be wondered how these extraordinarily barren isles can support a population of eleven thousand people, and support them without stint. But, to apply a Faroe proverb, 'He is a foolish mouse that has but one hole.' The Faroese do not rely on their fishing or their crops singly, though the former seldom if ever fails to be remunerative. They are notorious for the excellence of their hosiery. 'Førja uld er Førja guld' (Faroe wool is gold

1200
1000

to Faroe). And by export, a considerable revenue comes to the isles from the Faroe sheep, whose mutton, however, thanks to an execrable custom of killing according to seniority, is not good. But there is also a speculative element in the prosperity of the Faroes which has probably some beneficial influence upon the wits of the people. Besides their kine, their grass and cereals, their wool, skins, and codfish (the staple fish), the whales have to come into count. And whereas in one year a couple of thousand of the 'grind' (as they are called) may be driven to their deaths up one or other of the different sounds, in the succeeding year a couple of hundred only are killed. So important is the whaling industry that it affects every member of the community. The sysselemen, or provincial judges, look to their percentage on a capture as a matter-of-fact addition to the small stipend allowed by the Danish Government. The parish priest has his legal share also, as a matter of course (one-thirtieth of every catch within his district), and even the Crown itself does not disdain to participate in the profit—receiving a share equal to that of the priest. This profit is considerable. For not only will an average 'grind' yield in oil alone about thirty gallons, worth perhaps forty-five shillings, but will furnish sufficient food for a Faroe household for weeks. Each whale is worth in all about 3*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* It will be seen, therefore, that Faroe may well be grateful to the ocean which surrounds the isles. Ever since records were kept at Thorshavn (i.e. since 1584) nearly 120,000 of these 'grind' have been slaughtered in the isles; and to this day the whales, with predictions about the luck or ill-luck of the actual season, furnish the most exciting topics of talk in Faroe. A Faroeman swears by the oil-whale as a Switzer by his cow. From the very intestines of the sea-animal to the oil, fat, or 'spek' of it, nothing is wasted. The fat in particular may be melted down and exported as train-oil, eaten in a solid and raw state, salted and served like fat bacon, spread on the rye-bread which the Faroese commonly use, as a substitute for butter, or given to the sickly ones among them as equivalent for codliver oil; and it is probable that in this last instance the invalid, so far from making a wry face, will smack his or her lips and petition for a little more. So oddly do tastes and customs differ.

But besides the whales and common fish, I must not forget the sea birds as an article of food. Throughout the month of August the Faroe fowlers are hard at work snaring these by the

thousand. A party of twelve men, working in combination and rotation, will net between three and four thousand of them in a day, valued at a penny apiece. And, a little later in the season, you may see these birds hanging by hundreds at a time in Faroe outhouses, there to dry after a fashion for future consumption. A native Faroese would consider he was dining luxuriously on half a dozen of these shrivelled anatomies stewed or baked in whale-fat. But, even apart from the whale 'liqueur,' to a stranger the birds do not especially recommend themselves. The manner in which a Faroe fowler goes to work is rather interesting. He has primarily to consider the wind, inasmuch as this is the chief assistant force which he presses into his service. If the wind be favourable, he takes his long net, mounted on a stout wooden handle and frame, and goes to that particular cleft or crevice in the sea-rocks which he knows to offer a chance of sport. Down here he carefully clammers, until he finds good standing and working room where the birds are bustling past him before the wind. It is then a matter of muscles and routine. By barring the passage with his net he inevitably catches all the birds that continue their flight through the rift; and his attributes then must be mainly those of strength and endurance. Of course, not everywhere can a fowler attain to his perch by the exclusive use of his legs. Infinite pluck and nerve are both necessary. And so honourable a calling in youth is that of a fowler considered that you may hear grave and grey men of means and position recounting with sparkling eyes the adventures of their younger days, on such-and-such a rock, with an understood, if not uttered, regret that such days are over and past for them. A member of the Lagthing, or Faroe Parliament, was delighted, for instance, to tell me the tale of some of his early tricks on the rocks by Sandoe. A curious custom used to prevail here with regard to the fowlers. If one of them, in the exercise of his vocation, happened to slip, fall, and kill himself thereby, the body was not recovered by his comrades. They probably looked upon the accident as a visitation of God. Nowadays, they are more enlightened, and therefore more humane.

Of the Faroese themselves something must be said. They are as kindly, open-hearted, honest, and hospitable a class of human beings as the world contains. Few of the vices or faults of civilisation have yet found their way to the isles. Even money is not all-powerful in Faroe. A Faroese will do for love what a

haadful of silver will not constrain him to do: and more than once I was met with simple but violent expostulation (short, and indeed coarse) when I offered a man money in acknowledgment of self-sacrificial labour on my behalf. 'We do not things in that way in Faroe!' said one man. 'If you have money to spare, it is good, but give it not to me; do not try to make me take it, for I will not.' Nor was this the mere artifice of a rustic Tartuffe. The 'crescendo' of his voice was emphasised by the deepened red of his face, and he walked away like a big child in a temper. Again, when away from Thorshavn, staying awhile at this or that farmhouse in a distant part of the coast, if I wanted to return to the capital, it was always probable that there would be some competition between the different able-bodied men of the village as to which of them should make up the boat's crew to row me back. They were willing to sacrifice their day's work at home, to undertake the labour which often develops into positive danger of a row through the strong currents of the Faroe coastlines, and it was understood that the passage was to be a free one—for no money consideration, that is. Of course the majority of the Faroese will accept money when it is pressed upon them, but never without a little argument, in which they put before you the unwisdom of your exceeding lavishness. I lived three days in a farmhouse, sleeping in the best bedroom, under the whitest, lavender-scented feather-bed of the establishment, waited on with infinite courtesy and kindness by every one in the place, and supplied with such dainties as made the children's big eyes grow visibly bigger at sight of them (the dainties compounded especially for me, the stranger), and at the end of the time I could induce my hostess to take no more than five crowns of Danish money, or rather under six shillings; she was aghast at her temerity as it was. Elsewhere no amount of entreaty will prevail on a host to assess the money value of the hospitality he has extended to his guest.

In person the Faroese are as a rule remarkably comely, and this comeliness is even more noticeable in the men than the women. Their outdoor life, on the sea and the hillsides, bronzes them darkly; and they are very strong, also a consequence of their healthy lives. Almost without exception they have light-coloured hair, beards curling to the front in a funny manner, and blue eyes. The description of these northern ladies in the Sagas holds good to this day, but their beauty is much heightened by

their white skin, and a profusion of long yellow hair, which not seldom reaches to the waist or the knees, and is sometimes so dense as to cover the whole body. In figure the Faroese women are not very graceful. Even as children they are somewhat too plump; though among the maidens of the isles an artist might encounter several faces almost seraphic in their beauty and expression. There is no particular intellectual conflict up here to line the foreheads of growing womanhood prematurely. A cynic or a misogynist would affirm that their very ignorance or stupidity was an element in the beauty of the Faroe girls. Be that as it may, one is content that they are beautiful, and cares not why.

A characteristic of the Faroese is their peculiarly strong love for Faroe. Not even education can abate this apparently. If there is a gloomy discontent or ambition in the soul it will surely manifest itself in the later school-time of a boy. But in Faroe the little boys who attend the Royal School are heart and mind patriotic. One little boy, who could talk excellent English, used to come and chatter to me sometimes on his way to and from school; and he humiliated me time after time with his sage denunciations of the wickedness of the world outside Faroe. 'I will never go away from Faroe,' he confessed to me, 'because here I know that I am safe; no one in Faroe commits any crime; but if I once left it, I should not long live.' Of the magnificence of London he had no communicable idea; indeed, he did not think it worth much reflection, but he impressed upon me again and again that because there were so many people living all together in the one place, its wickedness must be awful. 'There is no place like Faroe,' this is the universal admission. And even old seamen who have tasted of the sweets of metropolitan life at Greenwich, and touched at far-distant ports of luxury, return to Faroe eventually, though from that time forward it be to hunger after the flesh-pots of the Continent with a longing that gives bitterness to their speech. No doubt a more frequent communication between Denmark and the isles would have some influence in tincturing and perhaps corrupting this pure love of country which now holds in Faroe. 'It is good to live in one's own land, though it be poor,' say these islanders, and they act up to the spirit of their proverb.

It is well known that the Faroes are among the healthiest localities in the world. The average duration of life in Denmark is thirty-six years; but in Faroe it is forty-four and a half. And

it is the rule rather than the exception in these northern isles for a household to have one or more veterans who sit in the chimney-corner and sigh or smoke while they watch the flow of life around them, but in which they can no longer take a lively part. A Faroe historian records the case of one Magnussen who married at the age of ninety, lived to see his wife become the mother of five children, the youngest born when he was a hundred and three, and who died at the age of a hundred and ten. And only the other day I visited a well-to-do farmer of forty-five or fifty, whose father had married a second time at the age of seventy-five, and whose two boys, born subsequently, were brought forward for me to see. They were fine sturdy youngsters, who made nothing of a walk to school in Thorshavn of six miles over bleak mountain sides, returning home in the evening. Nevertheless, though so favourable to longevity, the climate of Faroe by its excessive dampness and its fogs seems to inoculate most people with the most tenacious of colds. Be the weather what it may, sixty or seventy per cent. of the inhabitants are sneezing, coughing, or clearing their throats ; and the prevailing serious complaint seems to be lung inflammation. It is curious, moreover, that strangers coming into the isles for a prolonged stay or a permanent residence do not at first suffer appreciably by the humid and changeable climate. On the contrary, they are in better health than usual. But at the end of a few years they give way to the local epidemic, and wheeze with the best acclimatised of the natives.

Formerly, when letters and books from Europe reached Faroe only at long intervals, when the people were dependent on themselves for their education, and on their island traditions for their wisdom, the same eccentric idea about the initiation of their colds and coughs for the year was current in Faroe as in St. Kilda. The first stranger of the year brought with him the 'Krujm,' or cold-fit, which afterwards ran its race through the islands. Nowadays, such superstition is scouted by the educated Faroese, looked at askant by the majority, and only favoured by the old crones. Another result of the prevailing dampness is the difficulty of getting and keeping anything in a state of dryness. Guns rust in a day, even in a warmed room. British-made boots wear out with extraordinary rapidity. Clothes from the wash, unless constantly aired, have a trick of adhering together. Biscuits and the bread in use are always soft and flexible like leather. And most other things which ought to be crisp become thoroughly limp and emasculated. Nor is there a sufficiency of coal found in Faroe,

or imported, to make it usual to counteract this humidity by big fires. Peat is the national fuel; the cutting of which 'peats' is the chief industry of a large number of the people; and the peats are a lazy fuel. When, for example, I used to come in from the hillsides soaked with fog and rain, the only available drying process for my coat, trousers, &c., was to fold them to the size of the oven, put them in a baking-tin, and submit them to the mercy of the hotel range. No wonder after a few treatments of this kind the light-coloured fabric mellowed like a meerschaum pipe, and got to be as redolent of peat-smoke as the ordinary rafters of a Faroe kitchen. To this day the coat is marked indelibly with the size of the tin it was dried in; a certain number of precise squares have been well baked into it.

The words 'hotel range' used above must not deceive any one into the belief that the capital of the Faroes is studded with hotels. There is no such building throughout the isles. A stranger on his arrival will find himself in a sorry plight, or at least an uncomfortable position, if he be unprovided with a letter of introduction or identity. But, thus provided, he will be received into the community as a member, and will be either installed in the little back parlour of the one house which has provided accommodation for English visitors during twenty years, or made at home in the house of his acquaintance. This one building, which may be said to stand towards Thorshavn as an hotel, belongs to an old lady of highly respectable birth, who, notwithstanding her ninety-two years, will try to do personal honour to her guests, and at other times her daughter, a lady connected with the highest families in the land, will be constant and kind in her attendance. The few English who have been domiciled here during the past quarter of a century have all left a measure of personal flavour behind them which has become as it were incorporated into the atmosphere of the place. In a little dish on a chest of drawers in the sitting-room are the visiting-cards of these sparse wanderers; mostly grimed with the dust and peat-smoke and vicissitudes of many a year and thrice a score of different fingers and thumbs. Again, in an album, its covers torn in their honour, also on the chest of drawers, their photographs may be seen. And, as a tribute to their worth, my landlady, who had also waited upon them, was, for the first three weeks of my stay with her, effusive of her tales about the virtues of Mr. So-and-so, about the luxurious *impedimenta* of Captain this, about Mr. Jones's extraordinary disregard for the weather, and Mr. Brown's remarkable

love for the Thorshavn young ladies ; and until I was thoroughly well-impressed on her mind I had to submit to being called by the names of these favourite visitors of hers, whichever first came to her tongue. This historical sitting-room looks immediately upon a little brook which washes its base just before joining the sea, and herein, at any hour of the day, combats the most exciting might be witnessed between the different ducks on the stream about the different cods' heads which littered the shallow bottom of the stream. The bedroom attached to this sitting-room is tiny and low, and, until one is accustomed to it, constant bumps and bruises on the crown are the result of entering it. But time remedies these trifles.

As for the eating and drinking in this Thorshavn house, there is no lack of the wherewithal for either. For three crowns a day (rather less than three shillings and sixpence) the stranger may get three meals in the twenty-four hours over and above his rooms and attendance. Eggs (of a flavour all their own), butter, cheese, tinned meats, and Rutlej Pilsa (Faroe sausage), with wheaten bread, coffee, and cream, will compose his breakfast. For his dinner he may reckon upon exquisite soup of sago and milk, raisins and cherries (imported, alas !) flavoured with Muscat and sticks of cinnamon, beef or mutton, a whole chicken served in a most artless way, a duck from the stream under his window, two or three sea-fowl, some unsurpassable trout, or a codfish, with a pudding of meal and rhubarb jelly ; and for drink a bottle of Medoc or St. Julien, and coffee. While, for supper, chocolate, with fish, butter, and cheese. The beef and mutton will probably be found of leathery toughness, the chicken deficient in flesh and taste, and the sea-fowl queer to a beginner ; but the man must be pitifully dyspeptic or exacting who cannot live well and thankfully for his money on the rest. The poorer Faroese eat rye-bread, barley-meal porridge and milk, wind-cured or salted beef and mutton (cured in November and cut in the following summer), whale-meat, when they can get it, fresh and dried fish wholly unseasoned, and cods' heads. But a stranger need have nothing to do with the cods' heads and blubber. For his three and sixpence per diem he may rely on having the best of everything eatable in the isles.

It is possible that a visitor who comes to Faroe for a few weeks will now and again find the time hang on his hands. The weather is not always kind. With a spell of north-easterly winds and rain, driving directly upon little Thorshavn, and sending the

sea into the quaint thoroughfares of the place, he may be perchance a prisoner for awhile. True, the brook under the window will then gradually swell until it is a rushing torrent with a coating of white foam inches thick; and all the other mountain streams round Thorshavn will deepen and broaden their white paths down the olive-coloured hill-sides into the sea. But again, it is likely enough that a dense fog (of the kind called 'mjorki') will hide everything from the sight and complete his disgust. In this eventuality, he may go to the club and play billiards or whist, or the Danish card game called 'Lumba,' or he may have a bout of chess or draughts at a temperance hall in the town; and if he be an accomplished chessplayer he will be delighted with the skill of the Thorshavn youths. In truth, for centuries this little town has had a singular reputation for its chessplayers. Or he may go into the common-room of his landlady's house and join the assembly of Thorshavn and Faroe notables who like to meet there and discuss the petty events of the land, the quality of this farmers' bulls, the prospects of the 'grind' catch that season, the hazards to which the incoming mail steamer may be exposed by the persistent north-easters, the betrothal of a certain number of proper lads and lasses, the sickness of this man and the recovery of that. If, however, the starting-point of such talk be trivial, the talk itself will soon develop, and there will be a Babel of tongues enough to satisfy the hottest lover of speech in a very short time. Mariners who have travelled round the world in English boats will begin their yarns, exaggerating for the delight of their more innocent acquaintance with a truly Munchausenian love of a fib; they will grow eloquent, or at least vociferous, over their tales, gesticulate, bellow, and frown, stamp their feet, and jerk their straw-coloured beards, until in one loud unanimous roar of applause their audience will cut the narrative short, and overwhelm the story-tellers with innumerable glasses of medicated wine at a halfpenny the glass. And if haply an official in high position be present he may broach some topic of international politics for the interest of the Englishman, and betray a quite too ludicrous ignorance of the most elementary facts of extra-Faroese geography, or history, or statistics. But he will secure himself from conviction before the intelligence of his sharp fellow-countrymen by an abrupt retreat upon the subject of codfish or stockings, of both of which he may be an exporter, and therefore presumably omniscient. Nor will it be indifferent fun to hear a party of these bronzed and burly fisherfolk indulge in ballad-singing. Their

songs will be as old-fashioned as themselves, about this or that Faroeman of old times, who, discovering his need of a wife, forthwith steps with his henchmen into his white-sailed boat and scuds before the wind to the abode of a fair maiden whom he has never seen before, and whose father also is no acquaintance of his ; here he will land in the open day, and, with an honest but incredibly stupid face of assurance, step up to the house, his sword drawn in his hand, and demand without preface ‘your daughter so fair.’ The matter will end in a fray whereby either the suitor or the girl’s father is ‘cleft in sunder,’ and the girl herself is lost or won accordingly.

After these cool love-encounters, perhaps no subject of song is more popular than the whale ; and a clever Faroe-man will dramatise the whole process from the first sighting of the animals out at sea to the slaughter and final division of the spoil among the captors—dramatise it, pantomimically that is. As a rare treat, however, it is possible that a Faroe dance may be going on during these evenings of enforced durance at home, and then, if the Englishman be not shy, he may be well amused as a spectator and a participator. There is not much art in the local dance, but it is a survival of centuries, and as a sweating exercise it may be said to be an unrivalled form of pastime. One may see ounces of bulk rolling away down the reddened faces of the men and women and boys and girls, all linked together by arms and hands, and spinning round and round to the accompaniment of their own merry voices. Every Sunday evening there is a Faroe dance in Thorshavn ; for the Faroese are Lutherans, and by giving their morning to the church consider that they are entitled to enjoyment during the rest of the Sunday. Again, there is a remarkable eagerness among certain of the boys of the place to improve their knowledge of colloquial English. The youngsters are wide-awake to the importance of the accomplishment, and in this respect as canny as their more southern neighbours. The English they learn at the school is good, but it is scanty. The English they pick up from the few smacksmen of Shetland, Grimsby, and London, who touch at Thorshavn while fishing in the North Seas, is far from elegant and very denunciatory. As a consequence of this, the boys, when they talk English to a stranger, interlard their speech with countless impolite adjectives, which, however, they utter forth gravely and even bashfully, as if honouring their interlocutor. The result is amusing. And with the consciousness of this imperfection upon them, the boys hail a stranger with

any pretence to education, and by friction try to rub off the uncouth eccentricities they have acquired from the smacksmen, and to strengthen their school knowledge. They are good boys, honest as the day, anything rather than dense by nature, and deliciously naive, indeed their ignorance of humour is one of their characteristics. With the utmost self-possession two or three of them will ask to be enlightened as to the meaning of the English word 'sweet-heart,' which they have heard the smacksmen, maybe, apply to their pretty sisters, and when it is explained to them they will nod and look happy; nor seem to think the English fishermen at all transcending the bounds of good conduct by their use of the word. 'Is it not used, then, but to the man, or has the woman to say it also? You do not use it to the female also, is it?' This was the unsolved question put to me subsequently by one of these boys. It seems the Grimsby man had taught the boys since to call him by the euphonious appellation, but even then the boy was quite satisfied with the occurrence.

For the student visitor, Thorshavn has a library of considerable merit. In justice it may be said that no place has less need of such an institution. No one makes use of it except to bequeath to it books and papers which are a nuisance to their owner; and the rooms are kept for long months almost unvisited, so that on entering them one is struck with a chill of phenomenal and deadly dampness. Investigation proves that books of real antiquarian value are here coated with fine velvety moss or fungi, and that many periodicals concerned with the Færeyinga and Icelandic sagas are glued together by the maturity of the microbes generated in the fell atmosphere. The library is by no means a young institution, and an experienced antiquary would very probably make a discovery of importance among its fungi. In light literature, more suitable than Icelandic manuscripts for holiday reading, it can boast of such English works as the works of Cooper and Sir Walter Scott; while for solid and instructive reading the student of Danish might do worse than borrow one or two of its national histories, and trace out the ancestral characteristics between the English and Danish people comparatively.

But let the weather be good, as it is oftentimes in June and July for three or four weeks in succession, and the visitor will need no books, temperance hall chess, or educative conversation with small boys. With the absence of the fogs generated by the junction of the Gulf Stream with the colder ocean about and north of Faroe there is a rare exhilaration in the Faroe air. You may

clamber from Dahl to Dahl, and from Sund to Sund, over boggy valleys and craggy mountain sides and tops, never more than a few miles from the sea, and for the most part skirting it; discovering in the sequestered nooks of the island families of people to whom an Englishman is yet an object of the highest interest and curiosity—a being to show their children and honour with a humiliatingly obsequious hospitality. The queerest customs will betray themselves in these old-world corners, guarded landwards by great mountain walls impassable during the winter months, and facing a sea that is seldom or never smooth; and the stranger who is content to explore in this way must talk with his fingers and condone an inquisitiveness about his person and apparel such as one reads of in Captain Cook's South Sea Voyages. During his stay in this or that community of ten or twenty grass-roofed cabins, he must be prepared to be constantly on view: to be stared at deliciously by charmingly pretty girls, not only through the glass panes of his window, but from the very threshold of his room, which they will throng by relays in the most picturesque and provoking fashion. His kind entertainers, proud of the chance choice that has brought the stranger within their doors, will invariably press him to eat, until he is uncomfortable, rice puddings in mammoth bowls, thick milk in similar bowls, the yellow cream thereof besprinkled with brown sugar, home-made pastry (not without a suspicion of whale-butter among its ingredients), milk and excellent coffee; and the excitement at the windows and the door will culminate when the 'Engländer' takes the big wooden spoon in his hand and begins to break his fast.

There will be a rushing to and fro, a squeezing and hustling for 'places,' and chatter the most bewildering, all the time he is eating. But if he pleases he can put himself at ease readily, and gratify the pretty blue-eyed faces at the door by smiling periodically. And, believe me, he will gratify himself also thereby, for there can be nothing in all creation more lovely than the pleased and smiling faces of pretty innocent maidens like these Faroe girls. In these outlying places the stranger need not be in mortal fear of fleas. For the cleanliness of the Faroese is very creditable to them; and, however dilapidated and disorderly their houses may appear externally, the inner beams are smooth-planed and scrubbed systematically. The custom of using close stoves keeps the rooms free from griminess, and is convenient otherwise. In one tumble-down house in a land and water locked hamlet the

guest-room was provided with a very florid iron stove, of noticeable arabesque moulding, bearing date and inscription 'Vivat Printz Christian, 1708.' And in Faroe, as in Iceland, though in a lesser quantity, may be seen finely carved and captivating oaken chests, cupboards, tables, &c.; and the oaken four-poster which is the pride of certain farmhouses will be without doubt devoted to the use of the wayfarer.

First and last, however, the charm of the Faroes is their solitude; a solitude, moreover, not too easily dissipated. A pedestrian realises this very soon. Having left behind him the little hamlet where he slept throughout the previous night, he is in ten minutes alone. Spurs of black rock intervene between him and his late nest. On the one side of him he will have the sea in the still, blue, transparent waters of a sound separating him from another island; and on the other hand mountain oases will rise more or less precipitously, their superficies torn and riven by watercourses, the tumult of whose leaps down to the level is echoed grotesquely. In any case the scene will change completely every hour of his walking day, reserving only the old constituents of blue water, blue sky, dark rugged mountain crags; for the conformation of the Faroes is so tortuous that progress over them is a series of doublings. The sheep will clamber higher up the mountain sides as the traveller nears them; the gulls, fishing by the shore, will scud over the water with screams of alarm; the raven disappear with a croak—as if all creation were confederating to leave the traveller to himself. And in his day's walk it will be odd if he meet so many as one man or woman; whose wonder at the vision of him will serve to amuse him just as long as he pleases. To give a learned relish to his pastime, if he needs such, the traveller may keep a look-out for a garefowl or great auk, the possibility of whose survival in the Faroes is not wholly extinct. If he can take the bird alive, he will be several score of pounds sterlring the better for the feat, and a mere egg, duly authenticated, will enrich him by thirty or forty pounds. No such good luck is likely to fall in his way. Let it suffice him that he may walk during twenty hours of daylight if he pleases, and then, late into the summer night which is no night, when the now-purpled mountains are crested with gold, and there is already a suspicion of grey dawn over the eastern sea, he may once more confidently put himself at the mercy of the first gudewife whose house he touches.



COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH, ETC.'

CHAPTER LIII.

ANOTHER DISAPPOINTMENT.

CHARLES CHEEK returned to Court Royal Lodge. He had lost his brightness. He was troubled about himself and about Joanna. He had become engaged to Lady Grace without being really in love with her. He liked a free and easy life, and the formalities of Court Royal were intolerable to him. He liked variety, and one day at the Park was like another. He was naturally of a joyous and careless spirit, and he was forced by circumstances to think, and think seriously; hating responsibilities, he had entangled himself in a net of them, and saw no way of escape out of them.

The Duke said one day to his daughter that it was well to encourage the young man to be at the Court, for he heard he was very well off, and it was high time for Lucy to get married.

'He is gentlemanly and agreeable. He knows his place. We must not be selfish and keep Lucy to ourselves.'

Lady Grace turned her face aside. It did not occur to the Duke as possible that young Cheek looked higher.

'Should this come about, as I hope it will,' said the old man, 'it will be our duty and pleasure to make a handsome provision for Lucy. She has been devoted to you and to our whole house. We must not deal shabbily in the matter. I will speak to Worthivale about it.'

'For pity's sake, papa, not a word,' entreated his daughter, laying her delicate hands on his arm, whilst a little colour fluttered about her face, like the flush of the cloud when touched by the setting sun.

'As you will,' said the Duke; 'I only suggested it; but in these delicate matters a stranger's hand must not meddle.'

Lucy watched her friend closely. She knew that Lady Grace had no dislike to Charles; she knew also that she did not love him. Lucy was able to read her heart like an open letter, and

she saw that Grace was sacrificing herself solely for the sake of her father and brother. Did she realise the greatness of the sacrifice ? Was the preservation of the estates worth it ?

Lucy was glad of an opportunity to be with her brother one day to talk to him on the subject.

Beavis was looking careworn and sad. He knew that Lady Grace was engaged to Charles Cheek. The money advanced on the security of the furniture and plate had assured him of that. He took Lucy's arm. They were walking in the garden under a brick wall, against which oranges and limes were trained. The scent of orange flowers was on the air. During a frost mats were placed over these trees, otherwise they were exposed, and flowered and fruited in the open air. Lucy plucked a twig of orange blossom, and, holding it between her fingers lightly, looked into the flower. 'Beavis,' she said, 'I shall be picking these blossoms some time this year for the adornment of Grace. I had as soon be putting them about her in her coffin. You also would be happier that it were so.'

She did not look at her brother.

Though they were comparatively seldom together, she and her brother thought alike, felt alike, loved alike, as twins, each with the same disinterested and transparent love.

'No, Lucy,' answered Beavis, 'it is well as it is. The family must be saved, and no salvation is possible without sacrifice. The sacrifice the gods demand is always of the best and purest. They refused that of Saltcombe: it was great, but not great enough. Iphigenia must suffer that the wind may swell the slack sails again.'

But the Duke will never consent.'

'He must consent. He will do so under protest to save the family; that is always the first consideration with him. He would cheerfully sacrifice himself if called to do so, in such a cause.'

'Would it not be best that the sacrifice should be made by him—that the bulk of the property should be sold rather than that dear Grace herself should be forced into this most unsuitable connection ?'

'I do not think she will be unhappy. Charles is amiable; he is not brilliant, and she will lead him.'

'I am sure she does not love him.'

'I am not sure that he loves her. He is struck with her, that is all. He cannot ask of her what he does not give himself.'

‘I hope,’ said Lucy, warmly, ‘with all my heart I do hope that it will never come off.’

‘I see no other means of escape open. It must take place.’

Lucy was not happy. She took an opportunity of speaking alone to Charles Cheek.

‘Mr. Cheek, you must excuse my temerity. I have been brought up with Lady Grace from childhood, and I care for her as my own soul. I do, do hope you love her.’

‘Of course I do. But now,’ said the young man gravely—‘now that I have you all to myself, Cousin Lucy, you must be candid with me. I want particularly to know what are Lady Grace’s feelings towards me.’

‘She regards you very highly.’

‘If the property could be saved without the incumbrance of Charles Cheek, I suppose she would be well content?’

‘That is not a fair question to ask, and I will not answer it.’

‘Cousin Lucy,’ he said, ‘I am like Jacob at the foot of the ladder whose top reaches into Heaven, and Lady Grace is an angel standing on it, high, very high up. She beckons me to ascend, and I want her to come down to me. Till one yields there can be no *rapprochement*. Which is it to be?’

‘How can you ask? For her to descend is inconceivable. You must go up.’

He shook his head. ‘I do not care for such altitudes. The air is too thin, the light too strong, and it is deadly cold. I like the warmth of earth and its somewhat crass atmosphere.’

‘You would drag her down!’

‘Am I sacrilegious? I think her very perfect, quite angelic, but insufficiently human.’

‘What do you mean by human—that which is gross? Lady Grace can never become that. Human she is in the best sense. She shows you what human nature may become, not what it usually is.’

‘Quite so—*natura*, about-to-become. I like the present; there is unrest in a future participle. Cousin Lucy, to every substance, humanity not excepted, there are three conditions possible: the solid, the fluid, and the gaseous. I am in the first, she is in the last. I am not even, and have no desire to be, in the transition stage. She must condense and descend, or I must evaporate, and that I won’t do.’

‘Go higher, always higher!’ said Lucy, eagerly.

'The desire to do so is not in me. It is a strain to me to keep in this region of high culture. I am like Icarus. My waxen pinions are melting, and I shall go down suddenly.'

'Surely you do not object to culture.'

'Not at all. I like culture as it affects creature comforts. I would not go back a hundred years and be bereft of my bath, my daily paper, lucifer-matches, and having my hair brushed by machinery. Culture is excellent till it meddles with the inner man. When it begins to scrape, and reduce, and polish natural proclivities and robust individualities, why then, Lucy, I fancy it not.'

'You would like a luxurious savagery.'

'No, not that. Outer culture will relax and soften the inner brute. You begin by stifling nature and then mummifying it magnificently. Your highly crystallised culture resembles a Rupert's drop. Do you know it? It is a frozen tear of glass, so hard that you cannot break it with a hammer, and yet so fragile that it will crumble into dust between your fingers if you snip the hair-like end. Refine as you will, there is always a vulnerable point in your civilisation, and when that is touched the whole collapses. I like your culture well enough; a little of it is a wondrous thing; a great deal is overpowering. I have known a whole family suffocated by the breaking of a jar of otto of roses. You are passing human nature through retorts and sublimating it to an essence. There will be a reaction. The reaction is begun. It was the same in old Rome. There culture was carried to an extremity, and the barbarian burst over it and trampled it out. Now your high refinement of mind and manner and spirit has reached its limit, and the great mass of barbarous, vulgar life beneath is lifting itself up, to smite you down and destroy you.'

'The northern barbarians came down on Rome because the old Roman civilisation was selfish. The northern races were full of heroic virtues, self-restraint, submission to authority, and religion. Are these qualities to be found in the coming barbarians?'

'Oh dear, no,' said Charles. 'What we are coming to is the revolt against these very virtues which characterise your Christian aristocratic culture. What is coming is the emancipation of individualism, which has been distorted and suppressed by self-restraint, submission, and religion. You, brought up under the old system, are parts of a whole, and think and act and breathe and move as portions of the social machine. You are bound with

responsibilities, hedged about with duties. You cannot do what you like, you have to consider every one else. You have obligations to every child in the school and sick woman on her bed. You have to dress according to your station ; attend church to set an example. Where is the I Myself in this ? A poor bound lion in a net. The coming change is the bursting of the lion out of the net, and the rending of every mesh that entangled him ; it is the rebellion of the individual against obligations of every sort, social, moral, political, religious. Self will be free and follow its own will wherever it leads—free to enjoy every luxury that civilisation can give, without scruple from within or check from without.'

Lucy shuddered.

Charles laughed. 'This frightens you, and well it may, brought up as you are in the old world. I do not say that your old world is wrong, or that the new world which is beginning to live is right. They are counter principles. I tell you what is coming ; I need no prophetic instinct to see that. The individual for the first time since the fall of old Rome and heathenism is asserting itself. Hitherto the body corporate has been supreme.'

'That will be a terrible time. I dare not even think of it.'

'Not as bad as you suppose. In mechanics, when two forces meet, running in different directions, they do not kill each other, but they produce a resultant—that is, a force which goes in quite a new direction. The old idea is not exhausted, and when the new idea clashes against it, neither is neutralised so as to cease to be, both are modified and altered into a resultant of some sort. What the resultant will be when the counter forces in modern life meet, I cannot conjecture, but we shall see a new social departure in a direction of which we know nothing.'

'To return to Lady Grace.'

'You are right ; to return to her. You see, I do not want to break away from the new current, to plunge myself in the old, which is passing away.'

'What prospect of happiness is there to either, with minds and principles so dissimilar, so conflicting ?'

'That,' said he, and sighed—'that is what I continually ask myself, and am as often frightened at the answer.'

'O Cousin Charles ! do not risk the ruin of her, of your life, by persevering.'

'Remember, Lucy, she encouraged me. She made the

advance, not I. I would not have dared to speak unprovoked by her.'

'Cousin Charles ! you must release her.'

'What !—and ruin the family ?'

Lucy put her hands over her eyes. 'I must not interfere,' she said : 'my thoughts were only for her.'

'This is how matters stand, Lucy,' said Charles Cheek. 'I love and venerate Lady Grace above every woman in the world, but she is not the woman I desire as my wife. I suppose I am deficient in ambition. It may be that she would insist on a higher life, a life of more restraint than that I now lead, and this I do not choose to adopt. I belong to the new era, and declare for liberty. I like comfort, I like enjoyment, and I detest obligation. If I marry Lady Grace I throw myself into moral, social, and mental bondage. No doubt it would do me good, make a high-principled, conscientious English gentleman of me, but I refuse the schooling, and the results are not to my taste. Lucy ! I will give her up. I will go to my father and make the best terms I can for the family. It is *I* who shrink from the engagement, not she, and therefore we are bound to make some compensation.'

'Will you see her first ?'

'No, I will write.'

Lucy drew a sigh of relief. 'I am sure your decision is right,' she said, 'cost what it may to the family.'

CHAPTER LIV.

A NEW LEAF.

CHARLES CHEEK went up to town next day, reached Paddington at 6 p.m., and in twenty minutes was at his father's house. We regret the necessity, but it is unavoidable, for the fourth time we must introduce the reader to the elder Cheek at meals. In fact the man was invisible at other times, except about the business of the Monokeratic establishment. This time, however, we see him not eating, but about to eat.

Charles acted on the present occasion with want of tact : he began on the subject uppermost in his mind before his father had eaten, whilst he was hungry and cross. Charles had not

dined, but he was young and independent of his meals, whereas an old man is not. Mr. Cheek's business was one that occupied his mind actively all day, and his nervous system became irritable towards evening. Mr. Gladstone was his ideal at 6 p.m., Sir Charles Dilke at 6.15, Chamberlain was hardly rancorous enough at 6.30, and Labouchere was the man for him at 6.45. At five minutes to seven he was furious against the Constitution, the Church, the House of Lords, his soap, hair-brushes, his cook, and the Royal Family. The old man was in his drawing-room, a room as tasteless as the dining-room. It reeked of Tottenham Court Road.

‘It is all up,’ said Charles.

‘What is up? The glass or consols? Be explicit.’

‘My engagement with Lady Grace Eveleigh.’

‘Indeed—your engagement. Ugh! Thought they'd draw a score across that account. Who did it?’

‘I—I released her. They are not to blame. I have written to say I will not hold her to her word.’

‘You have, you—you Colorado beetle!’

‘Yes, I have. I could endure the bondage no longer. I must have my clothes made for my back, not my back shaped to my clothes. I dare say the life of these aristocrats is very fine, and their ideas superfine, but I like a broad life and unchastened ideas. I have tried how I could get on among them, and I am tired of the experiment.’

‘So that is settled?’

‘Yes, it is. The scheme was yours. I have done my best to accommodate myself to it, but it is impracticable.’

‘Impracticable. Do you know what you have done? You have danced about this young woman long enough to fool me into believing you were in earnest, and I have bought up several of their mortgages, which I would not have touched but for you.’

‘Deal generously with the family, father,’ said Charles. ‘It is not their fault that the engagement is broken off. It is entirely my own doing.’

‘That matters not,’ said Mr. Cheek, roughly. ‘I don't care for them, but I do care for my own money. I shall foreclose at once while the depression lasts. When land is up again, sell. That's business. I have a bill of sale on the contents of their houses. I'll release that pretty quick too.’

‘Dinner is on the table, sir,’ said the servant, entering.

‘But, my dear father, I entreat you to consider that it is I who wrong them, and that some reparation is due to them for the disappointment.’

‘Do you hear?’ roared the old man. ‘Dinner is on the table!’



‘Yes, but stay a moment, I entreat you.’

‘What—let the fish get cold! Not for a score of Kings-bridges. Dinner is on the table. Go in!’

During dinner the old man scarcely spoke. He ate in a vindictive manner, as if he were hurting his son's feelings by each bite, and knew it, and delighted in doing it. When he cut the mutton he cut as though he were stabbing the offender; when he

helped himself to gravy it was as though spooning up his blood ; when taking potatoes and rice he dabbed the spoon into the vegetables as though stirring up and torturing his Charles's brain. When he drank he glowered over the rim of his glass at the young man. But he said nothing till the dessert was on the table and the servants withdrawn.

Then it was Charles who began.

' Father, I have a proposal to make which will surprise you. It is seriously made. I want you to put me in the way of earning my living.'

Mr. Cheek set down a macaroon he was eating, and which was bitten in half, and stared at his son, then laughed insultingly.

' I am quite in earnest,' said the young man. ' Give me an opportunity of working and earning as much as will support me. I ask of you nothing further. I desire henceforth to be beholden to no one, not even to you. I wish to be responsible for my actions to no one, to cut away the right of controlling and rebuking me which you have exercised so freely and so offensively. When I was living on an allowance from you, you then had some right over me ; when I live on my own earnings, you will have none. I will allow of none. When the money was given to me, I did not know its value ; when I earn it by hard work, I shall know what it is worth. You have been rough of tongue with me, and I have felt it, without caring to amend my ways and deserve better ; when I am free from it, I may find a motive for reform.'

He spoke frankly ; his pleasant handsome face bore in it an expression new to it, a look of dignity it had never worn before. His hair was light, almost white in the gaslight, his eyes were blue, and as he spoke moisture gathered in them. His hand was on the table, playing with a raisin stalk—a white hand, well formed, that twitched and broke the stalk into many pieces, showing his nervous emotion.

Mr. Cheek said nothing, but stared open-eyed and open-mouthed.

' You do not understand me,' continued Charles. ' I allow that I have been a sorry fool. I am resolved to be so no longer. I should be a fool if I continued my pretence to the hand of Lady Grace, and mated out of my sort. I had an ambition once to be a soldier, and that you contradicted. Afterwards I had none. You provided me with money, and I spent it. I had no aim, no motive to do otherwise. You urged me to this grand connection,

and I went along the path you pointed out, partly to please you, partly because myself dazzled. But my eyes have been opened in time. I see that it is not a way I can walk on. I will choose another, humbler; I will work for my livelihood, and then I can spend my life as my ambitions spring up and direct.'

'You are in earnest?'

'So much in earnest that I refuse the four hundred pounds you have allowed me hitherto.'

'Refuse the allowance!'

'Yes. I will not touch what I have not earned, and so deprive you of the right to rebuke, and outrage me.'

'Outrage you!' echoed the father.

'Yes, outrage me,' said the young man. 'I have endured a great deal from you. I have borne it because you are my father; but every offensive word from you I have felt more keenly than you have supposed possible. It has not spurred me to do better, it has driven me to do worse. Now that is over. I will be my own master henceforth, responsible to no man, and enduring insult from none.'

Mr. Cheek was still too amazed to speak. A dim consciousness that he had wronged his son awoke in his mind, but his mind was too coarse in texture to understand fully his fault. He was a rough man, who when out of humour used rough words. He meant them at the time, but he did not mean them to inflict mortal wounds. Education teaches man to measure his words, and check them as they pass from his heart over his tongue. Old Cheek had never had the education which imposes this self-restraint on speech. Charles had inherited from his mother a more sensitive nature than his father's; from boyhood he had been accustomed to hard words, and these had alienated him from the old man, who loved him whilst he abused him. Charles was naturally weak, and his father's roughness had made him weaker. The old man had mortified his self-respect, till self-respect was almost dead within him. Now, suddenly, it had sprung to life and asserted itself.

Mr. Cheek stood up. He said nothing, and left the room. Charles saw no more of him that evening.

Next day, at breakfast (the fifth meal at which we have met him), he asked his son whether he still meant what he had said the night before, and when Charles insisted that he had spoken seriously the father said, 'Charles, I recognise something good

in this. It gratifies me. Begin to work for yourself. Learn the value of every sixpence. I will put you with Messrs. Newcomen and Bowcher, ship-agents in Wapping. They will take you to oblige me. I will see them, and arrange about salary.'

'I ask nothing better.'

'And—accept from me fifty pounds to begin life upon. You must live in lodgings. But we see no more of each other till you have grown into this new condition of life. If you go into lodgings, you must have some money.'

'I accept it, father,' said Charles, 'and,' he added with faltering voice, 'pardon me if I spoke too plain, and wounded you last night.'

'Wounded me! Not a bit. Words break no bones.'

CHAPTER LV.

IN VAIN.

A MONTH had passed. Charles had not been seen by his father, who had fulfilled his undertaking, and had placed him with shipping agents, in a subordinate place. The old man had arranged with Messrs. Newcomen and Bowcher, who were ready to oblige him. Charles was to have plenty of work, and was to receive two pounds per week, of which, no doubt—though he did not know it—his father found a portion.

After the lapse of the month, Mr. Cheek senior visited the agents and inquired into the conduct of their new clerk. Messrs. Newcomen and Bowcher were glad to testify that as far as they could judge he was steady and attentive to his work. He had been regular in his attendance, careful, obliging, and reliable.

Then Mr. Cheek made an excursion to Ebury Street, Pimlico, where his son lived in a boarding-house, kept by a Miss Jones. He chose a time for his visit when he knew his son would be at the office. Ebury Street, Pimlico, is a long way from Wapping, but Charles went to and fro by steamer from Vauxhall Bridge, and the air did him good.

Mr. Cheek found the dingy lodging-house kept by Miss Jones; he rang the bell, and rapped sharply with the knocker, and the door was opened by Miss Jones herself, a thin lady with curls, a pasty face, and eyes so pale in their colour that they must have

been washed and rewashed with soda till all the colour had been washed out of them. Miss Jones was full of amiability when Mr. Cheek introduced himself, and hastened to assure him of the respectability of her establishment, the high social standing of her guests, and the comforts they enjoyed. The house was admirably situated, away from the fogs; and the health of the boarders was robust, as she could testify by their appetites. They breakfasted together, and she presided. She furnished them with coffee and tea, whichever they preferred. Some gentlemen were averse to tea in the morning, and they drank coffee. Others liked to change their drink week and week about. Each had an egg and a rasher of bacon, sometimes she substituted bloater for rasher. There was always a rack of toast on the table, as a pleasant change to bread and butter. When the gentlemen returned from their offices they had tea, and in the evening supper off cold meat, bread, and cheese, 'best American. I had Dutch cheese for some time, but I find the American is preferred by the gentlemen, so I have that now.'

She went on to assure Mr. Cheek that her lodgers were of the most select description. For many years she had among them an old Waterloo officer, but he was dead. The lady lodging on the first floor ought, if every one had his rights, to be a baronet, but her aunt, from whom she had great expectations, had left everything to a female companion who had exercised great influence over her at the last. It was a pity, Miss Jones thought, that the lady had not gone to law and upset the will, and recovered the title and a real sealskin jacket which had gone to the companion, worth forty pounds. Another of her lodgers was a gentleman of some literary fame, who at one time had earned five pounds by writing verses for Christmas cards.

Miss Jones went on to say that she charged for her lodgings a pound per week, exclusive of ale and washing, inclusive of a dinner on Sundays and Christmas Day.

Miss Jones did not provide the gentlemen with toilette soap, for she found them more fastidious in this particular than in their meat and drink. One liked glycerine, another oatmeal, and a third would use nothing but carbolic soap.

Mr. Cheek listened to Miss Jones without interrupting her, looking the faded woman through and through with his piercing eyes, taking stock of her. He was probably satisfied that, with a good deal of affectation, she was a worthy woman at core, for he

gave a grunt, stood up, interrupted her flow of information, and begged to be conducted upstairs to his son's bedroom.

'Quite Alpine, I have been told,' said Miss Jones, as she conducted him to the very top of the house. 'The air at this altitude is keen, salubrious, and invigorating. The gentlemen all like the



top storey where they can see over the roofs. But, between ourselves, your son is my favourite, and I have accommodated him where he can have the finest view and the purest air. Yonder, sir, you can catch Doulton's Pottery Works: the effect, with the morning's sun on them, is very fine.'

Mr. Cheek looked round the little bedroom. It was in the roof, with a sloping ceiling. There was a fireplace, but the grate

had not been used during Miss Jones's tenancy. The walls were hung with the cheapest of papers in two dingy colours. The furniture consisted of one chair, a chest of drawers with the mahogany veneering sealing away, a wash-hand-stand of painted deal suffering from cutaneous disorder, and a bed, above which hung a photograph in a frame. Mr. Cheek knew the picture. A duplicate had been sent to him some time ago. Through the ring of the frame, with its head drooping over the picture, hung a withered lily-of-the-valley.

Mr. Cheek came slowly down stairs, holding the banisters with one hand and rubbing his nose with the other.

‘Will this last?’ he said to himself. ‘What can be the meaning of it all? As for his taking offence at any words I may have said when annoyed, that’s absurd—a mere excuse. Words are wind, and wind blows away.’

When he reached the parlour again, he said to the landlady, ‘Look here, ma’am. I don’t want you to tell my boy that I have been here to-day. Give him your best bedroom, not an attic broom-and-pail cupboard. Turn out, if need be, the old woman who missed a baronetcy. I’ll pay the difference. Give the boarders kidneys for breakfast now and then, and fowls for supper, or anything else they fancy. Cost, ma’am, is no object to me. I can’t feed Charles differently from the rest, so they must all be well-fed together. No more of your American cheese; Stilton and Cheshire, and, if you will, Gorgonzola. Not a word about me. Take all the credit to yourself.’

Charles was able to get away early on Whitsun-eve. Monday would be a Bank holiday. He had been hard worked, and worked till late at night for some weeks, and Messrs. Newcomen and Bowcher put up their shutters on Friday night, and allowed their clerks holiday from the Saturday to the Tuesday morning. Charles took an early train on Saturday to Plymouth, and arrived at the Barbican the same afternoon. He went to the Golden Balls immediately, without stopping to have anything to eat. His heart was beating fast. His step was light, his eyes full of glad expectation, and he held his head up proudly. He was surprised to see that the house of Lazarus had been repainted. The shop was open. A good deal of business was done on a Saturday, double on the eve of a Bank holiday. People would pawn necessities to obtain money for a day’s pleasure.

He looked in at the window, and saw Joanna behind the

counter talking to a woman who was in the shop with some article she wished to dispose of.

Charles waited till the woman came out, then he caught the door before she closed it, and stepped in.

Joanna, not hearing the door reopened, did not suppose any one had entered. She did not see him, as she was engaged examining the article—a brooch, which she had taken.

Charles had a few moments in which to observe her. She was well, even handsomely dressed, but pale and worn. She put away the brooch, and seated herself; then she leaned her elbow on the counter, and put her hand to her brow, and drew a deep sigh.

‘Joe !’

She sprang to her feet, and stepped back. He saw her turn deadly pale, and then lean both her hands on the counter to steady herself, as though afraid she would faint. She recovered herself, however, quickly, but her colour did not return as rapidly as her composure.

‘Mr. Charles ! You here !’

‘Yes, dear Joe, I cannot help myself. I could not do otherwise than come. I have not had the chance before, and I have been hungering for the sight of your face, and for a word of encouragement from your lips. I came straight away by the morning train, and have just arrived. Why have you not answered my letters ?’

‘I sent you something.’

‘Yes, a lily-of-the-valley, but not a word accompanied it.’

‘I sent you what I most valued, the first flower from the root Lady Grace gave me. I would not have parted with it to any one else. I would not have picked it for myself, but—you have been kind to me, and—I thought I might never more have the chance of giving you anything.’

‘Why did you not send me a word ?’

Joanna made no answer. She looked down, her pallor remained, and she, who was usually so collected, stood trembling before him. She tried to disguise her agitation by shuffling her hands to and fro on the counter.

‘Oh, Joe ! you know that all is up between me and Lady Grace. We did not suit each other. We belonged to distinct worlds, she to the world that is passing away, I to the world that is coming on—though, I admit, but a poor specimen of that. Now that is all over, and I am free. I am changed from what I

was. You knew me as an idler and a spendthrift, without aim and without energy. Now I am a clerk in a shipping office. I do not live on my father's bounty. I have refused his allowance. I live on what I earn. I work now for my daily bread.'

She looked up and smiled, but there was intense sadness in her face that showed through her smile like a shower through a rainbow.

'I get a hundred pounds a year, and I have fifty pounds per annum of my own, left me by my mother, independent of my father. May I take a chair, Joe?'

She nodded, and pointed to one. He drew it beside the counter, and seated himself; but she remained standing with her elbow on the desk, and her hand over her eyes, shading her face.

'I am lodging with an old lady in Ebury Street,' he went on, 'and pay her a pound a week. I do not dine there, but at an eating-house, and that costs me about nine shillings a week, add a shilling for extras, and that comes to twenty-six pounds in the year. I think I can clothe myself on ten pounds, so that leaves just sixty-six pounds clear. I am to have my salary raised if I go on well. Now, Joe! Take away your hand, and let me see your face, let me look into your eyes. Will you give me the hope that you will come and be mine, and let us begin the world anew together? I will—I will work, and you shall never reproach me with idleness again. If I have you, I shall be happy; I shall care for nothing else. I shall do my work with a light heart, and sing over it, knowing that I am going home to *you*. You have done me a great deal of good already. You will make me do a great deal more hereafter, if you will consent to be with me always, to encourage me.'

He put up his hand to draw aside her arm from shading her face. Then he saw how great was her agitation. She was shaking like an aspen leaf, her face ash white, her eyes dim. She clasped her hands, and they quivered. She unclosed them, and put one to her brow, and put it down again, then laid her hand on her breast, and seemed to gasp for breath. She could not speak.

'Joe!' he said, 'why do you not answer me? It was for you that I refused my father's help, that I might have the right to choose whom I would, and I will have none but you. You have had a wretched life here. I have led a wasted life. You have taught me to break away from my past, and I would release you,

in return, from yours. We shall begin the world together on very little, but love lightens every load and seasons every dish.'

Then she put both her hands outspread before her, and touched his breast, as he leaned forward, and thrust him away. Her eyes were dark in their sockets, and gleamed. 'I cannot—I cannot,' she said, quivering in voice, eyes, and lips, and every muscle of her body.

He looked at her in surprise. 'Why not, Joe? You must, indeed. If you take from me this hope, this ambition, I dare not say what will become of me. It is only my love for you which has lifted me to the threshold of a better life: now that you have led me to it, will you thrust me back into the folly and emptiness from which I have struggled up?'

'I cannot,' she said, slowly recovering herself. 'I signed you away for a hundred pounds. That is why I never answered your letters. That is why—now—now—' She could not speak. Something rose in her throat and choked her.

'Is that all?' exclaimed Charles. 'That was a joke.'

'No,' she answered, 'it was no joke to me. Your father was in earnest, so was I. And now it is too late—now—'

Then the door burst open, and Lazarus, in a black frock coat, rushed out of the inner part of the house.

'What! You here again? You dare to enter my premises. You scoundrel, you wastrel! Get out of my doors directly. Is it not enough that your father has snatched the Marquess from my grasp, but must you come here to carry off my wife also?'

'Stand back,' said Charles, thrusting the Jew away. 'I will not be touched by you. Wife! Joanna never shall be that if I can prevent it.'

'She is! Tell him, Joanna. Let him hear it from your own lips—make the news the sweeter, perhaps.'

Charles stood looking from one to another, petrified.

'Mr. Charles,' said the girl without looking at him, but with face averted, and playing a tune with her fingers on the counter to conceal her trembling, 'I told you it was to be so. This morning we went together before the registrar, and after sundown the cohen will be here to marry us by Jewish rites.'

'You coward! you vile Jewish coward!' cried Charles, losing all control over himself, and seizing Lazarus by the collar and shaking him. 'You have taken a despicable advantage over this

poor girl, to make her life ten thousand times more wretched than it was before.'

As he shook the Jew his blood heated, then boiled ; and, blind to what he was about, stung by disappointed love, jealousy, disgust, flaring into inconsiderate rage, he took up one of the many



sticks that were exposed in the shop for sale, and, holding Lazarus by the collar, swung him from side to side, beating him fast and hard. Lazarus screamed for help. He was not much hurt, he writhed so that the blows fell on his new black frock coat, but now and then a cut caught him across the legs. A woman—Mrs. Thresher—who had been in the kitchen, hearing the shrieks, ran in, and then rushed forth into the street crying 'Murder !'

Charles was excited to madness at the tossings, and screaming, and dodging of the Jew, at his want of success in hurting him.

His arm relaxed at length ; he was exhausted, and he cast the wretched man away.

‘ There !’ said he ; ‘ remember Charles Cheek in connection with your wedding-day.’

Next moment he was in the hands of the police, summoned by Mrs. Thresher.

‘ I give him in charge !’ shouted the Jew. ‘ He has half-murdered me in my own house ! Take him off to the lock-up !’

So it came about that Charles Cheek spent his Whitsun holidays in confinement.

CHAPTER LVI.

PREPARATORY.

FOR some weeks Lazarus had been in a bad temper, not at all in a lover’s genial mood. His mortgages had been taken up by Mr. Cheek and his bills met ; his power over the Ducal family was ended. Disappointed revenge and frustrated ambition had combined to make him irritable. He was now in possession of a very large sum of money—of the whole of his savings through many years of privation and work, and he did not know what to do with it. He did not, of course, keep the money in the house ; it was lodged with his banker. The question that recurred to him again and again was, How should he invest it ? The ferment in his mind was a relief to Joanna. It saved her from annoyance. He almost forgot he was a lover in his anxiety about his money.

When they sat together over the kitchen fire, his talk was of the condition of the money market, on promising investments, on the rise and fall of various stock which had attracted his interest ; or he spoke fretfully of the selfishness of Cheek senior in coming to the assistance of the Kingsbridge family. At one time Cheek was an idiot, throwing away his money on coroneted fools ; at another he was deep and selfish, robbing him, Lazarus, of the fruits of his labours, just as they were ripe for picking.

‘ I know what he’ll do,’ grumbled Lazarus. ‘ He’ll puff Bigbury as he puffed his Monokeratic system, run up a hotel, build a town, and call it Cheekville. Then his son Charles will

marry well, become M.P., then Baronet, and so the unicorn will poke its way into respectability.'

But though Lazarus was not an ardent lover, he did not lose sight of the proposed change in his relation to Joanna.

'My dear,' he said, 'I've got a book of etiquette written by a lady of rank among the lots here, and I've read it. I learn from it that in good society it is not thought the *chic* for us to be married from the same house. So I've spoken to Mrs. Thresher—a very motherly body, though her line is ham and sausage—and she will take you in; she has a spare room on the second floor, where you can reside till our nuptials. I hope you will find nothing to complain of in the marriage agreement which I have instructed Crudge to draw up and bring with him the day before our wedding. I have made over everything to you, because I really do not think I have a relative near enough for me to know him. With us of the seed of Israel, Joanna, maidens are always married on a Wednesday, and widows on a Friday; but, as you are not one of us, it really does not matter what day is chosen, so I have fixed on Whitsun-eve as suitable, then the honeymoon can coincide with the Bank holiday, when excursion trips are cheap. With us, the marriage agreement is called the *kynos*, and is made on a Sunday, but as you don't belong to the house of Israel, any day will do for that; and I've told Crudge to be here on the Friday. Then, on the Sabbath we'll walk over together to the registrar, as you're a Christian; and after sundown, when the Sabbath is over, and the Sunday begins, a cohen will come from Bristol and will marry us by religious ceremonial, as is customary among us. What a fortunate thing it is, Joanna, that I kept the howdah all these years. At last it will come in serviceable; for in our marriage ceremony the bridegroom and the bride stand under a canopy of silk or some precious stuff, and the cohen blesses them, and takes a ring from me and puts it on your finger, whilst I say, "Verily thou art espoused unto me, according to the rites of Moses and Israel." After that a gobletful of red wine is handed to the cohen, and he blesses it, just puts his lips to it, and passes it to us. We shall have to empty it between us, and then I dash the goblet on the ground and break it, by way of putting you in mind that you are but brittle ware.' Lazarus shook his head. 'Ah, Joanna! what are ceremonies without a moral meaning?'

'Is that all?'

‘Yes, that is all. Now, although you must sleep and have your meals at Mrs. Thresher’s, I don’t see that you need neglect the shop. I shall be very much engaged, as the three rooms upstairs have to be cleared, and a new range put in the kitchen. Talking of ranges,’ said Mr. Lazarus, rubbing his chin in his palm, ‘they are difficult things, what with their dampers and traps. They are like organs, only to be played upon by one who understands the stops. And where will you find a cook who understands a range? When she wants to bake she pulls out both the dampers, one of which is designed to draw the fire away from the oven to the boiler; and when she wants to boil, she pulls out both dampers, one of which is designed to draw away the fire from the boiler. And when she wants neither to bake nor to boil, she pulls out both dampers, and carries the fire up the chimney, which is just the same as if an organist pulled out stop diapason and hautboy when he wanted pianissimo; and tremolo and dulciano when he wanted forte; and diapason, hautboy, tremolo, and dulciano when he wanted nothing in particular. Come here, Joanna.’ He made her follow into his sanctum. ‘We must have a clearance here. It is a loss, but it cannot be helped. Do you see all those shelves full of chemist’s drugs? I took the lot once for a bad debt, but I’ve never been able to sell them. Ipecacuanha, cod-liver and castor oils, extract of senna, mercurial ointment, tincture of taraxacum, arnica, laudanum. There is enough there to dose the Barbican.’

‘What, am I to throw them all away?’

‘Yes, unless you can dispose of them better. And you can sell the bottles.’

‘I shall find a use for some,’ said Joanna.

